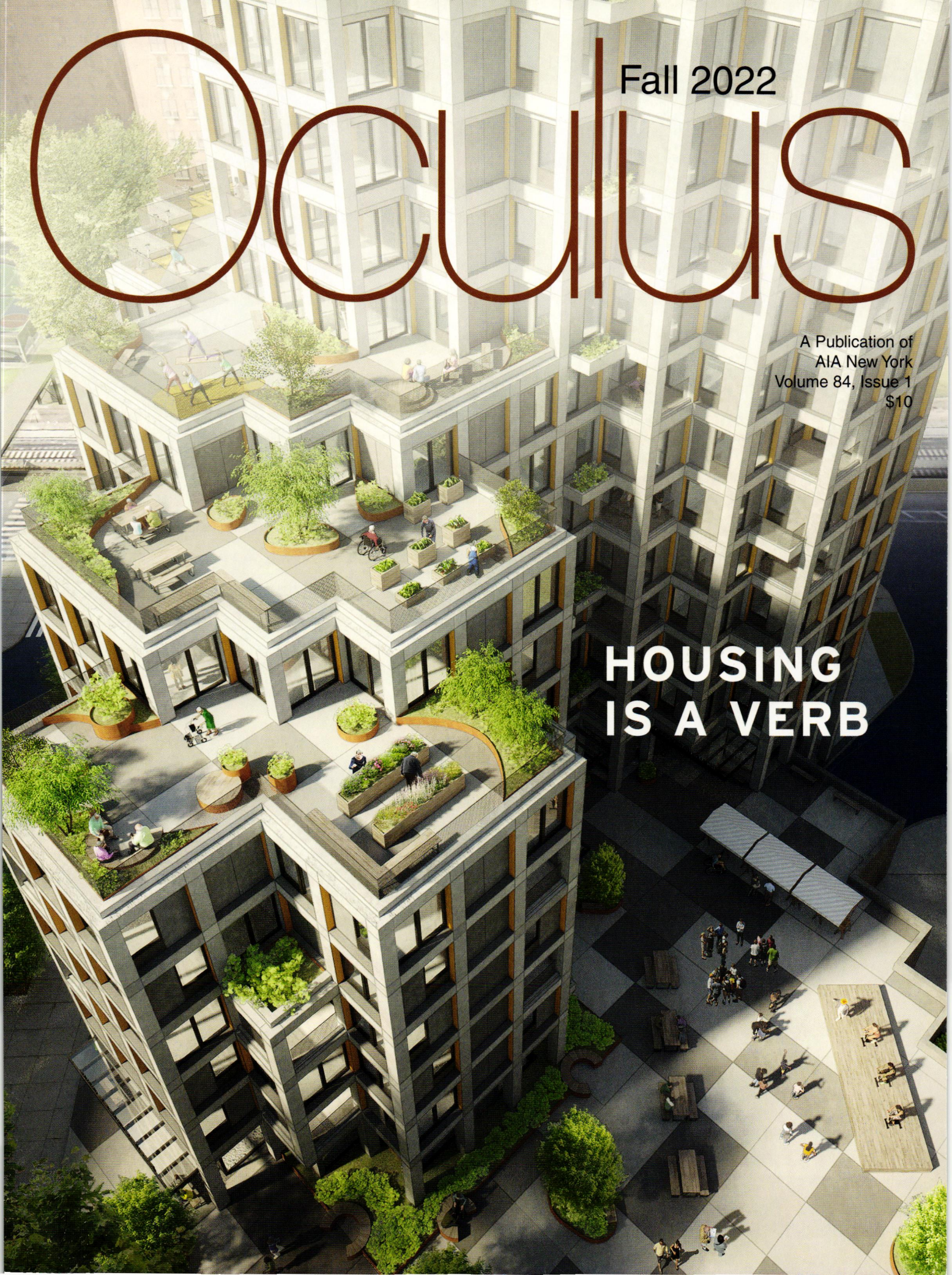

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Fall 2022

A Publication of
AIA New York
Volume 84, Issue 1
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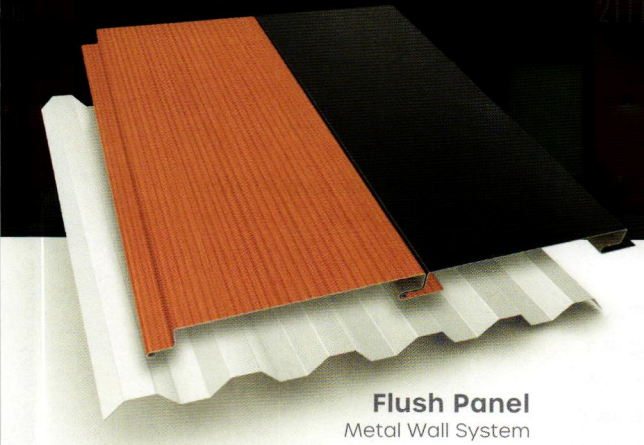
Oculus is a benefit of both AIA New York and Center for Architecture membership. For information on professional and public memberships, please call 212.358.6118.

Oculus is published by BNP Media II, LLC four times annually (spring, summer, fall, and winter) for AIA New York, 536 LaGuardia Place, New York, NY 10012. Printed in the U.S.A. Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement #40612608. GST account: 131263923. Send returns (Canada) to IMEX Global Solutions, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON, N6C 6B2. Change of address: Send old address label along with new address, name, and phone number to info@aiany.org.

Strength, Beauty, Heritage



The façade features metal wall panels in a dramatic palette including a custom wood grain finish that ties the building to the tribe's historic home in a reservation in the woods of Northwest Minnesota.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin Apartments, Minneapolis Installing contractor: Progressive Building Systems
Architect: Cuningham Group Architecture GC: Loeffler Construction & Consulting Photo: alanblakely.com

Flush Panel
Metal Wall System
Custom Wood Grain, Matte Black

7.2 Panel
Metal Wall System
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NYC HOUSING CRISIS: LET US WORK TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

It should be simple. To thrive, humans need more than just a roof over our heads. At a basic level, we need shelter for sleep, congregation, and nourishment. Daylit interiors, access to private and semiprivate outdoor spaces, and views to greenery, nature, and the horizon should also be considered fundamental.

The opportunity to use public open spaces that enable recreation, rest, reflection, and gathering iscrucial for building communities and strong social networks. Positioning vital services and retail within a 15- to 20-minute travel radius ensures that acquiring necessities won't mean a second commute for urban or suburban residents.

Building our housing with materials and systems that are durable and resilient to weathering and climate change helps ensure our safety. Considered and inspiring design that actually incorporates community and occupant input sparks both owners and residents to preserve, reinvest in, and maintain their basic infrastructure over the long term. And ready access to social services provides critical and timely support to residents in need.

Yet, the magnitude of the housing shortage—a dearth of hundreds of thousands of units in New York City—combined with environmental factors such population growth, the changing climate, and ever-rising inequality, all increase our community's exposure to potentially disastrous living conditions.

As the professionals in the room, we have the responsibility to make sure the solutions we offer are timely and sustainable. This means housing that is not only carbon-neutral, resource-positive, resilient, safe, and equitable, but whose maintenance is achievable, and whose operations are intelligently endowed, over time. We need to prioritize design criteria, such as the longevity of residential facilities and the wellness and resilience of the individuals and families who will occupy them, through a process that involves occupants and community members and balances key metrics like expediency and economic bottom lines.

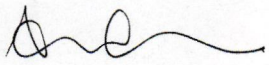
Each of the many issues we face as a community—homelessness, exclusivity, unaffordability, and lack of support services, to name a few—requires design strategies that not only address near-term emergency conditions, but also instigate a culture of long-term, incremental improvement. And indispensable rental assistance policies that address the most at-risk of homelessness should be accompanied by new policies that also support the aspiration toward ownership.

New York City's challenges, given its scale, its socioeconomics, and the advanced age of its infrastructure and housing stock, are at least distinctive, if not unique. The city's recently published *Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness* takes an understandably optimistic view as it considers not only the construction of new affordable housing, but also the rehabilitation of existing stock, opportunities for infill, and the bolstering of various supporting systems and networks.

As your champion of a *just practice,* I am inspired to think that investing in a greater variety of housing solutions will help society find ways to transition away from the carceral state: housing programs and structures that aid in reducing recidivism, bolster the formerly incarcerated with services and the reentry support they need, and help at-risk individuals avoid detention altogether.

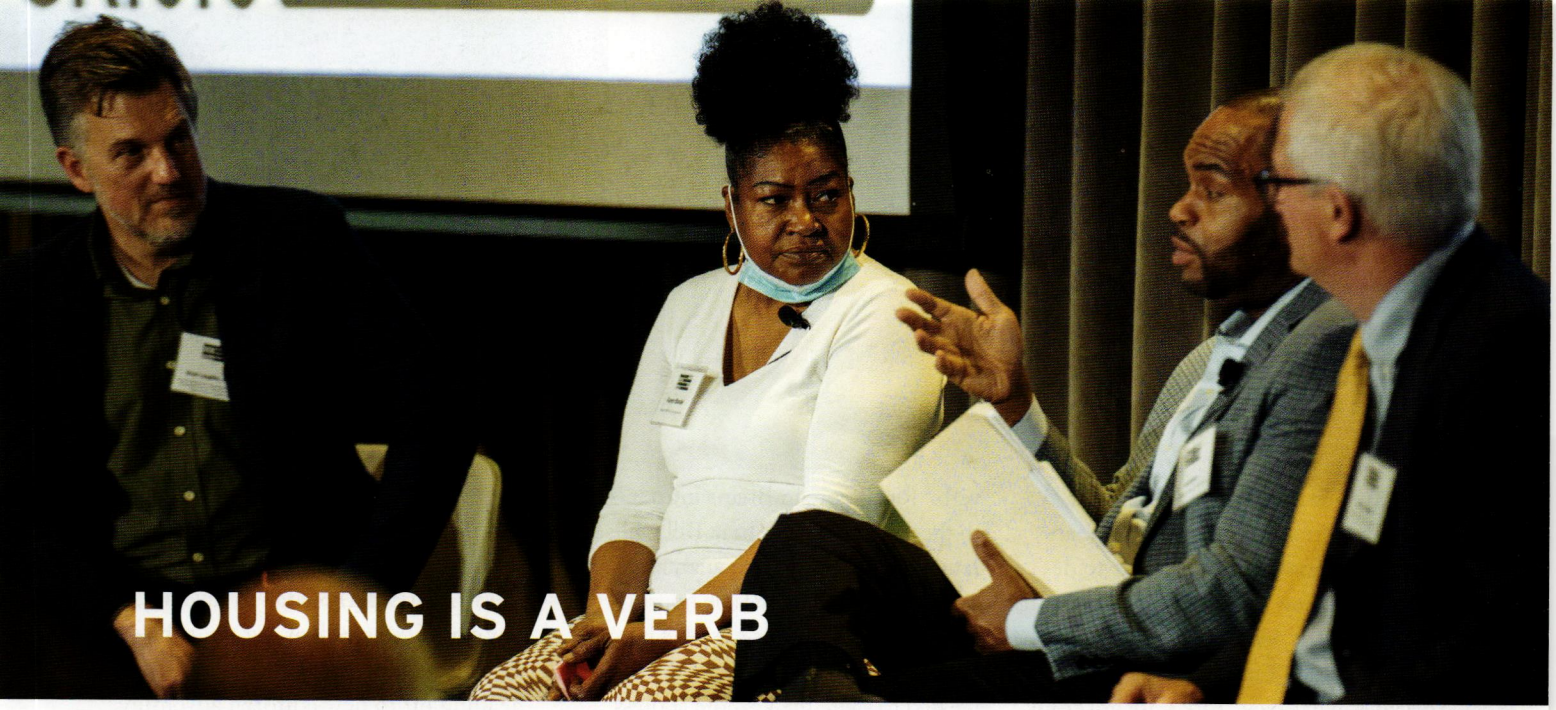
We champion our non-profit and governmental partners who are working tirelessly along these lines. In June, AIA New York Chapter recognized Erika Ford and the organization she founded, LIFE Camp Inc., and MHANY Management for their efforts in these areas. Over the summer, AIANY and the Center for Architecture led two conferences on the subject of housing; reports from these conversations can be found in this issue, and more are forthcoming.

As we ponder the current wisdom on these topics, I invite all Chapter members to consider how the proactive, all-hands-on-deck resourcefulness with which AIANY responded to the pandemic's impacts on our built environment can be applied to the slow-motion, potential calamity of the housing crisis. I look forward to the debate that will follow and the possible impact of nascent initiatives and advocacy that our members are developing this fall. ■

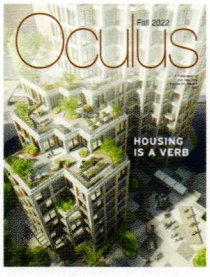


Andrea Lamberti, AIA, LEED AP BD+C
2022 AIANY President

Photo credit: Rafael Viñoly Architects



HOUSING IS A VERB



Cover: At Sol on Park, a 200-unit affordable housing development for seniors in the Bronx, Magnusson Architecture and Planning focused on creating thoughtful unit floorplans that maximize usable space and light. A variety of gathering spaces on multiple floors will allow residents to have choice in where and how they socialize. The project is expected to be completed in 2027. Photo rendering courtesy of Magnusson Architecture & Planning with nightnurse images.

Above: Brian Loughlin, AIA, APA, of Magnusson Architecture & Planning moderates a conversation with, left to right: Karen Blondel, founder of the Public Housing Civic Association; Jamie Smarr, now CEO of NYC Housing Project; and NY State Senator Brian Kavanagh. Photo credit: Sam Lahoz

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

EVOLUTION OF A CITY–AND A MAGAZINE

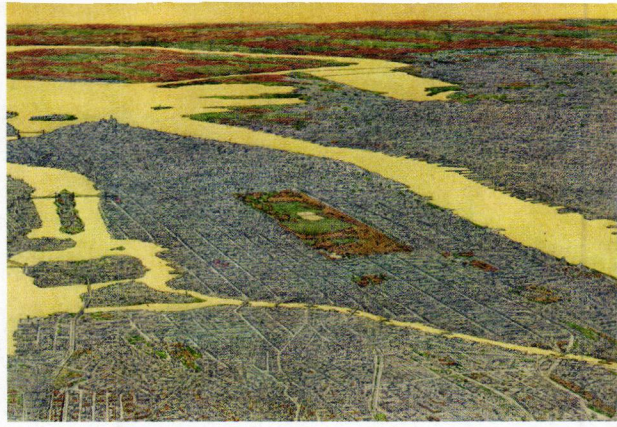


Image: Alexander Severin for the Regional Plan Association

In mid-June of this year, NYC's 421-A Tax Abatement expired. The 51-year-old provision offered tax breaks to developers of new construction projects in which 20% of residential units qualify as "affordable." Looking back over the decades, what New York City got from 421-A probably was not worth what it ended up giving up in tax dollars: We remain squarely in the middle of a housing crisis.

Yet it's encouraging that the conversation around housing is growing more dynamic, with urbanists and planners leading the charge, and significant financial commitments being made from the government at both city and state levels. In early June, Governor Kathy Hochul signed legislation making it much easier to convert hotels into affordable housing, a topic Bill Millard covered in our Fall 2021 issue. In addition, the governor's State of the State address outlined a $25 billion, five-year housing plan to create 100,000 affordable homes, including 10,000 for supportive housing. Also in June, Mayor Eric Adams launched his so-called "City of Yes" initiative, which featuress several provisions to encourage creation of "affordable housing."

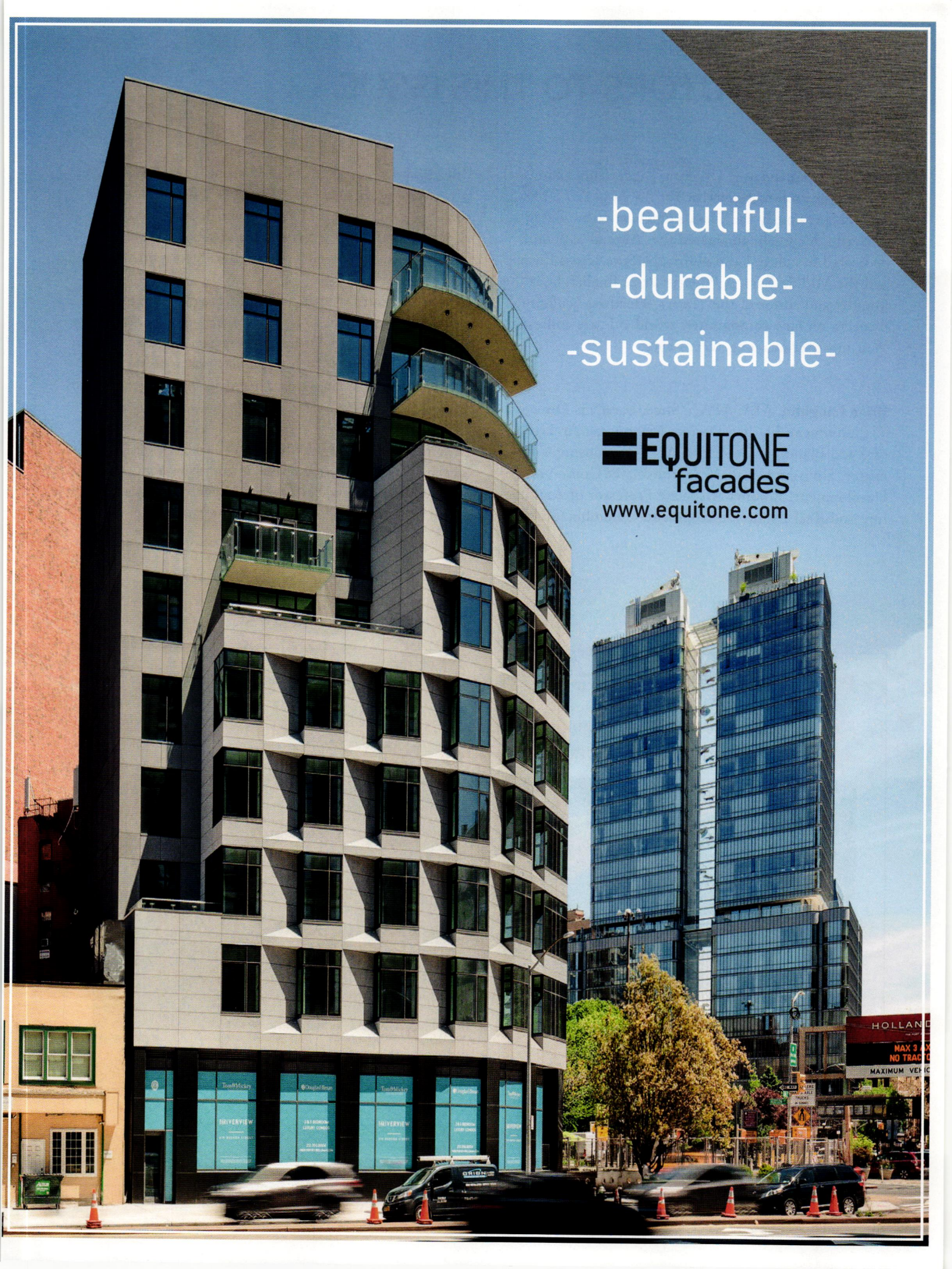
To help us look at this expansive subject through an expert lens, we asked Brian Loughlin, AIA New York Housing Committee co-chair and principal at Magnusson Architecture and Planning, to come on board as a guest editor. With Brian, we decided to focus less on finished outcomes and more on the process of creating housing, taking a cue from architect and theorist John F.C. Turner's idea that "housing as a verb." Read more in Brian's introduction to the feature section. In it, Bill Millard returns with an in-depth analysis of what the phrase "affordable housing" really means today. (Has the label become more harmful than helpful?) We're also pleased to share the keynote address that *New York Times* architecture critic Michael Kimmelman delivered at the NYC's Housing Crisis conference in May. And architecture historian Kristen Szylvian reflects on the Operation Breakthrough federal housing initiative, launched a few years before NYC 421-A.

Taking time to look back and learn from both successes and mistakes is critical when it comes to housing, and to growing a city in general. Planners must look both ways, Januslike, as they go. *The Constant Future: A Century of the Regional Plan*—an exhibition up for a few weeks in October at Grand Central Station, curated by James Sanders and Ric Burns—offers an uplifting take on the value of the long view in both directions. Read more about the show at aiany.org and at rpa.org.

When I lifted up my own head from my laptop recently, I realized I've been with *Oculus* for almost five years. Since I came on board in early 2018, we've lived through historic upheavals and changes in culture and society. How these will play out in the built environment remains to be seen, but it's an exciting time to be an editor with such significant shifts afoot. Some progress is already visible in the process of how architecture happens, with the recognition that more points of view need to be empowered from the beginning of any project. This goes for *Oculus* as well, and I'm proud that we've signed onto the SAY IT WITH-ME(dia) pledge to diversify our coverage as well as our contributor voices as we move forward. I am heading off to new editorial adventures after this issue, but I am thrilled that our managing editor, Jennifer Krichels, will be taking the reins as top editor, and that I'll stay involved as an *Oculus* Committee member and perhaps with an occasional byline! Thank you to our small but brilliant and resourceful editorial team during my tenure: Jennifer; our copy editor, Elena; our many hard-working editorial interns from School of Visual Arts MA Design Research, Writing and Criticism; and our publishing team at BNP Media. It has been an honor to hold this post and work with the *Oculus* Committee and committee chairs Andrea Monfried and Lisa Green, as well as with the indefatigable AIANY/Center for Architecture team. My special thanks go to Suzanne Stephens, Jesse Lazar, Joe Corbin, Meghan Edwards, Camila Schaulsohn, Katie Mullen, Carol Bartold, and the brilliant Ben Prosky for their support, ideas, and sheer goodwill along the journey. *Oculus* turns 85 next year, and I can't wait to see how it continues to evolve.

Molly Heintz

Molly Heintz
Editor-in-Chief
editor@aiany.org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Michael Kimmelman ("Thinking Bigger about Housing") is the architecture critic for the *New York Times*, and was previously the *Times*'s chief art critic. Based in Berlin, Kimmelman created the "Abroad" column, dedicated to cultural and political affairs across Europe and the Middle East. A Pulitzer Prize finalist, he is the founder and editor of the *Times*'s "Headway" column, focusing on how communities worldwide are addressing their most serious long-term issues.

Brian Loughlin, AIA, APA, ("Street Level") is Director of Planning and Urban Design, Magnusson Architecture and Planning; Co-Chair, AIANY Housing Committee, Division Chair, APA Housing & Community Development; Adjunct Associate Professor of Architecture and Real Estate Development, Columbia GSAPP.

Bill Millard ("Let's Just Call It Housing") contributes regularly to *Oculus*, the *Architect's Newspaper, Metals in Construction*, *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, and other publications. His book *The Vertical* and *Horizontal Americas,* assisted by a Graham Foundation grant, moves glacially forward.

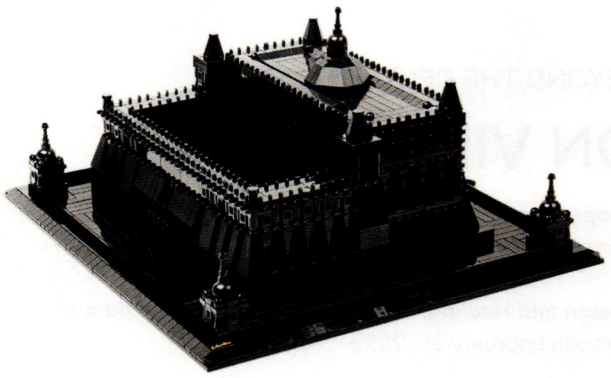
Kristin Szylvian ("Operations Breakthrough's Forgotten Prototype Communities") is graduate director of public history at St. John's University. Dr. Szylvian's research focuses on urban history and housing and urban planning policy. Her articles have appeared in *Buildings and Landscapes*, *The Journal of Urban History*, *Planning Perspectives*, and *Environmental History*.

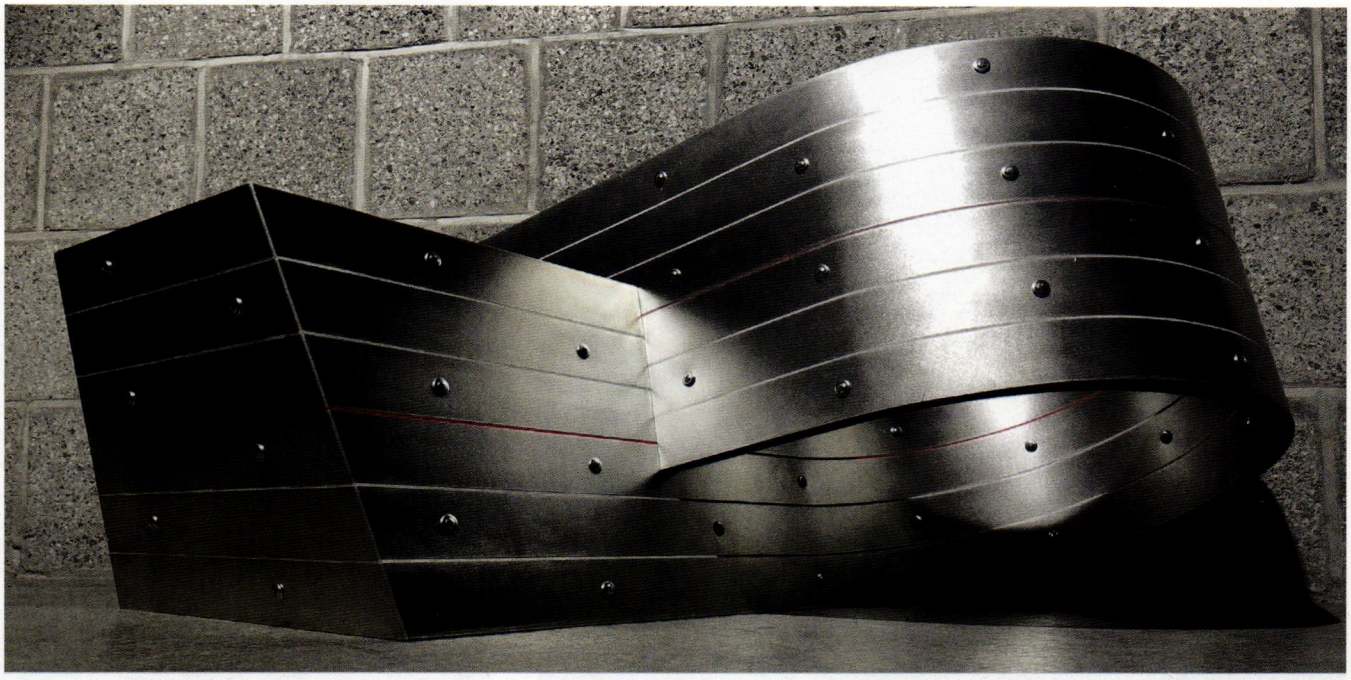
Roshita Thomas ("Beyond the Center") and ("At the Center") is an architect and strategist based in both New York and India. She helps research and develop brand identities and campaigns within the architecture, media, and design realms. ■

ON VIEW

The Cooper Union
30 Cooper Square

Model Behavior
October 4–November 18, 2022





From top: Ekow Nimako, *A Sacred Place*, 2019. Assorted LEGO elements adhered to MDF plinth, 10x24x20 inches. Cameron Wu, *Circumvolute 00*, 2021. Aluminum fastened to plywood substructure, 18x36x18 inches. Besler & Sons, *Barn Raising*, 2022. Printed paper. 36x36x59 inches.

Curated by Anyone Corporation, "Model Behavior" investigates how architectural models inform social behavior. Our current design landscape is shaped by the pandemic. Designs created in response to this change impact social behavior; architectural models have the capacity to do that as well. The exhibition asks its audience to reflect on the potential of an architectural model—how it can inform the discipline and shape contemporary culture.

The display features over 60 works and objects by 44 artists and architects, including artists Olafur Eliasson, Isamu Noguchi, and Thomas Demand, and architects Peter Eisenman, Darell Wayne Fields, Greg Lynn, and many more. Among them is a model by Ekow Nimako titled *A Sacred Place*, designed by utilizing assorted LEGO blocks infused over a plinth of MDF.

Complementary to the exhibition are lectures hosted by the School of Architecture, including art historian Annabel J. Wharton (October 10) and architect Kiel Moe (November 8). ***Roshita Thomas***

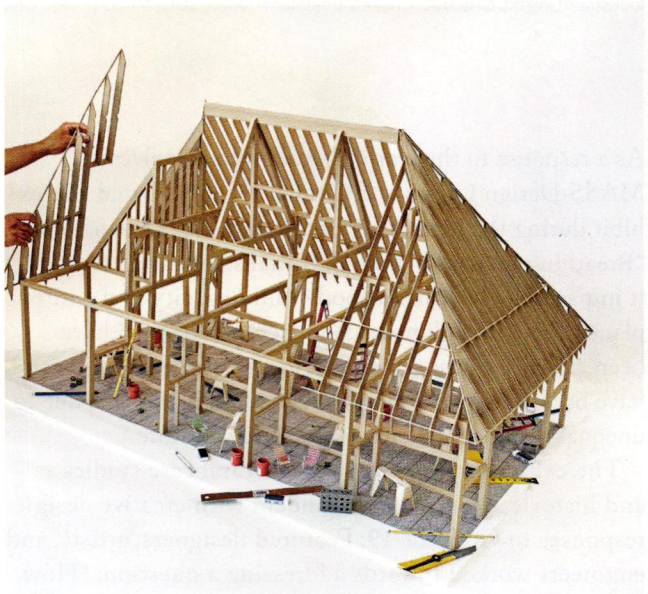
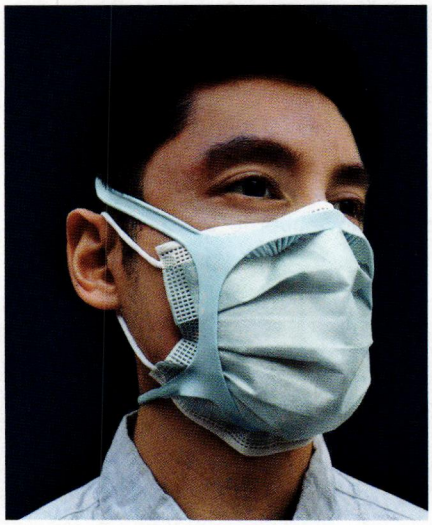


Photo credits, from top: Samuel Engelking; Cameron Wu; Shirley Chen

ON VIEW

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
2 East 91st Street

Design and Healing: Creative Responses to Epidemics
Through February 20, 2023



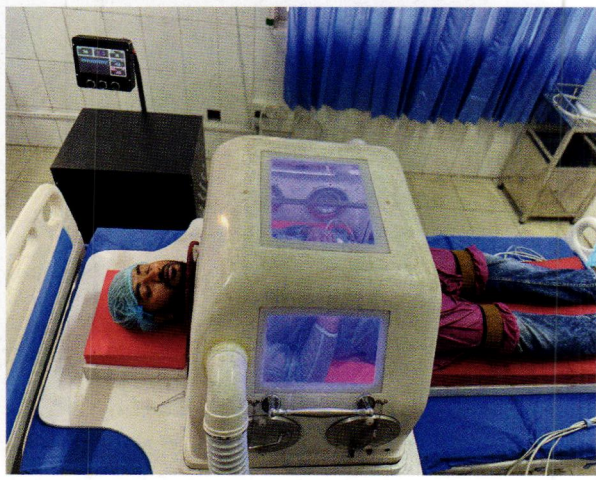


Photo credits, clockwise from top: Courtesy of Cooper Hewitt; Courtesy of Cooper Hewitt; © Iwan Baan

Clockwise from top: Essential Mask Brace, 2020, Sabrina Paseman, Katherine Paseman, and William Paseman. Shaash Negative-Pressure Ventilator, 2021, Karnaphuli Industries Limited. GHESKIO Cholera Treatment Center, 2015, MASS Design Group.

As a response to the world that we find ourselves in, MASS Design Group and Cooper Hewitt created this exhibit during the unraveling of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Breathing is spatial," the exhibition states, and therefore it impacts the scale of the body, building, city, and entire planet. And, though most countries in the world have been affected by the pandemic, marginalized communities have been impacted more dramatically than others, due to unequal access to housing, jobs, and healthcare.

The exhibition provides architectural case studies and historical narratives in tandem with creative design responses to COVID-19. Featured designers, artists, and engineers worked towards addressing a question: "How can I help?"

Among the pieces on display is a rubber mask brace conceived by two engineers, Sabrina and Katherine Paseman, who are also sisters from the San Francisco Bay Area. They designed the Essential Mask brace in response to the critical mask shortage during the pandemic. This rubber brace helped give surgical masks the same secure seal around the nose and mouth that N95 masks provide.

Also included in the exhibition are designed medical devices, protective gear, infographics, political posters, architecture, and community services—all with the shared intention to reduce structural hurdles that isolate certain sections of society from accessing the care that everyone deserves. ***RT***

AT THE CENTER

ON VIEW

Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place

Fairy Tale Architecture
November 11, 2022–February 25, 2023

"Fairy Tale Architecture," an upcoming exhibit at the Center for Architecture, showcases a series of whimsical domestic structures, weaving narratives between fairy tales and the making of an imaginative realm.

Architect Andrew Bernheimer and author Kate Bernheimer, a brother and sister duo and curators of the show, invited more than a dozen design professionals to imagine worlds where characters from fairy tales outsmart their enemies and live happily ever after. Each contributor designed imaginary spaces that explore this conceit, giving a new twist to the surreal worlds inhabited by familiar characters. The exhibition originally began as a series of stories alongside images of designed spaces for the online publication *Places*, an amalgamation of architecture, design, and literary critique. It lives on as a printed book as well, *Fairy Tale Architecture*, published by ORO Editions in 2020. ***RT***

Participating firms include Abruzzo Bodziak, Bernheimer Architecture, Guy Nordenson Associates, LEVENBETTS, Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis, Smiljan Radic, Rice+Lipka, Snohetta, SO-IL, Studio Sumo, Xavier Vendrell and Mary English, Ultramoderne, and Young Projects.

Image credit: Graphic design by Once–Future Office

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIVING

Matthias Hollwich's newest work in housing for all ages takes many forms.

BY JENNIFER KRICHELS

Images courtesy of HWKN

A concept rendering by new residential brand FLX LIVE incorporates a novel apartment typology that can support residents at all stages of life.

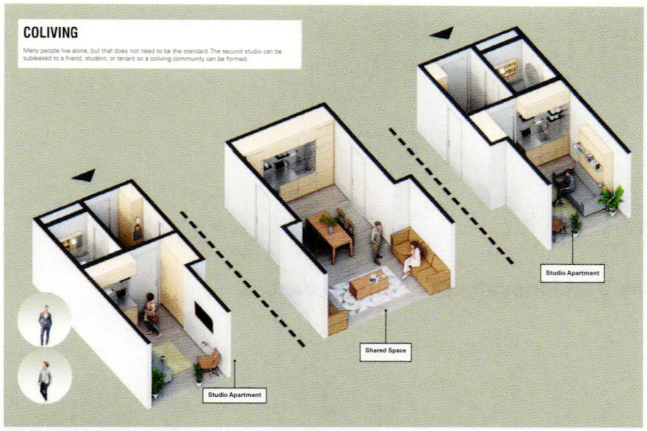
With a career-long commitment to examining the intersection of aging and architecture, Matthias Hollwich, founding principal of HWKN, is beginning to see years of intellectual work start to emerge as reality. Recently he launched a new residential brand, FLX LIVE, in collaboration with Mark Gilmour, former CEO of Virgin Residential. The FLX concept is based on what Hollwich calls a "double studio" apartment layout that allows renters to change the type of space they have, from a roommate-friendly layout that can transform to accommodate children or caregivers later in life. "Mark and I are totally aligned about the idea of creating a living product that is inspired by older people, but good for everyone," says Hollwich.

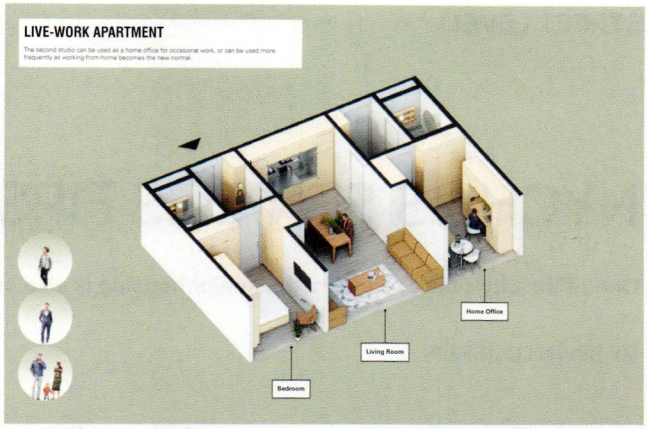
The partners recently signed a contract with People+People, a community living company owned by a Berlin developer who commissioned an R&D project with the goal of licensing the FLX LIVE concept for its own sites. Six years after the publication of the manifesto *New Aging: Live Smarter Now to Live Better Forever*, which he co-authored with Bruce Mau Design, Hollwich sits down with the book's contributor, Jennifer Krichels, to discuss the state of aging as the world reconfigures many aspects of work and life in reaction to the past two-and-a-half years.

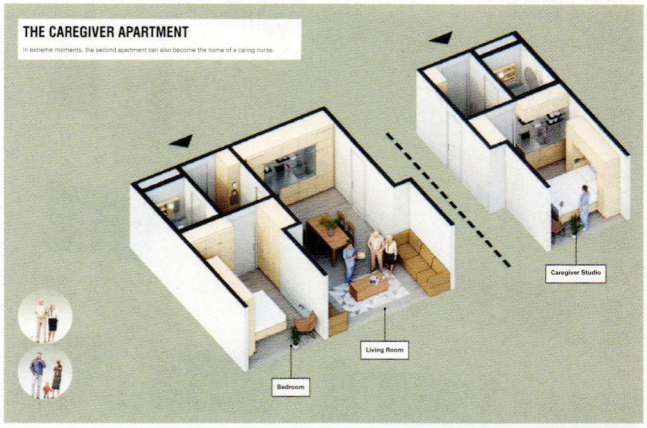
JK: What are some of the projects coming out of the FLX LIVE brand?
MH: The People+People partnership is exciting because they did a lot of research on aging and intergenerational living, similar to us. There is this totally specialized senior-living kind of industrial complex that controls everything. Anything more open, more flexible, more inviting to more generations doesn't really exist, so there's a huge gap in the market. But it's not just a business opportunity—it's a human opportunity, because we have to fight segregation on every level. That's what FLX and People+People want to be about.

We're also working with two landowners on a site in East Orange, New Jersey. They're taking over decommissioned churches and they want to make these very socially conscious places with amenities and living and schools and everything—they are thrilled about the FLX idea. Next month we're going to start our first programming and massing on one of the sites.

There are opportunities in the world right now; the way we live is changing radically, technology is changing radically. We feel we have to grab them all at once to create a better type of project, because otherwise it's just a better







Above: Concepts for FLX LIVE include floorplans to accommodate co-living, a live-work arrangement, and a resident caregiver, among others.

retirement community. We think there's a moment of paradigm change we want to establish about how we live and age in our own future.

How are you working these concepts of aging into your own life?

I am on the board of Stonewall Village, an LGBTQ+ not-for-profit that is trying to establish healthier and better senior living for older LGBTQ+s in the city. It started out as a digital network, where you basically get help wherever you are—there are all these people you can talk to and connect to doing events throughout New York. When I joined the board, I started to talk about WeWork and WeLive and those sorts of things. They approached me and asked if it would be a good idea to build a senior LGBTQ+ building, and I said, "No!" because I don't believe in those.

Instead, I told them about Sonder. It's basically a predictable Airbnb—they're renting or buying apartments throughout a city and renovating them to a standard and renting them out for a day, a week, or months. They don't own one building; they operate a network of apartments. I told Stonewall this is what they should do: Find apartments throughout the city that you can then put into your support system and rent out to LGBTQ+ members when they're at a certain threshold. And here's the kicker—especially in the gay community, there are so many who don't have people who want to inherit their properties. The pitch was basically to offer members an option to donate their apartment to Stonewall Village, so they then make it available to the next LGBTQ+ senior. So it is a network that becomes bigger and bigger and bigger, and more and more potent, through people donating their property into the system, with the condition, of course, that it needs to be used for low-income LGBTQ+ seniors.

Stonewall is about to buy the first apartment because now they want to prove the concept, so they are starting with one where it is being bought and renovated to senior-living standards, which HWKN will help them with. When this is done, they're going to go out into the community and ask for donations. It's a radically different idea but it has some merit, and it seems to be happening right now. It's really exciting.

How have things changed in this conversation since *New Aging* was published?

When we worked on *New Aging*, it felt really trailblazing and exotic, and now reality is catching up, and that was our wish. People come to me and say they read the book and started to think about aging very differently.

We see that a lot of entrepreneurs are trying to get into this market with fresh eyes. I think there is going to be a lot of change in the way senior living is happening, and it's all enabled through technology or more strategic thinking or network thinking. So old operators who did all these nursing homes and assisted living facilities should watch out, because the market is going to change a lot when young entrepreneurs offer great alternatives. ■

NYCHA'S SENIORS FIRST

One of the city's best programs for senior housing is also one of its best innovators of housing design.

BY BRIAN LOUGHLIN

Image credit: Above: Courtesy of Studio Libeskind; Left: Courtesy of Magnusson Architecture and Planning

Above: The Atrium, designed by Studio Libeskind, is a new 100% affordable senior housing building that will be built on vacant land on the NYCHA Sumner Houses campus. Left: A rendering of the roof terrace at Casa Celina, a 205-unit affordable housing development for seniors, designed by Magnusson Architecture and Planning and nightnurse images at the Sotomayor Houses in the Bronx.

What started as an effort to develop much-needed senior housing on underutilized parcels of land at various NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) campuses has quickly become a showcase for some of the most innovative and ambitious designs in affordable housing—not just in New York City, but arguably anywhere in the country. In 2019, after highly competitive RFPs for their Seniors First Program, NYCHA announced two projects that perhaps best demonstrate how the housing authority hopes future iterations will lead the way: the Atrium and Casa Celina.

In total, the Atrium (at Sumner Houses), designed by Studio Libeskind in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn, and Casa Celina (at Sotomayor Houses), designed by Magnusson Architecture & Planning in the Soundview neighborhood of the Bronx, will generate nearly 400 affordable apartments for seniors. But the hope of both design teams is that the impact of these two buildings will be far greater than units alone. "Our goal with the design of the Atrium was to create a sense of community—designing meaningful spaces for living for both the individual and the collective," said partner-in-charge, Carla Swickerath. "The final result will be a building that creates a sense of civic pride, one that welcomes the neighborhood and provides much-needed housing and resources for seniors in Bed-Stuy."

Visually, the angular and irregular geometries of both buildings can be seen in direct contrast to the regimented punched windows and rectilinear façades of the NYCHA buildings surrounding them. This is an evolution of the public housing typology: at once consistent with the freestanding towers that often characterize these properties, and the street rhythms that such a plan creates; and wholly new in their reimagining of both the resident experience and the relationships of these structures to the adjoining neighborhoods. There is a notable vibrancy to each of these buildings, and not just because of their light façade coloring, but also in the way their ground floors allow for a certain transparency and connection to the community. Centrally located on their respective campuses, the Atrium and Casa Celina house a broad range of programs and activities, which draw older adults from the surrounding neighborhood into the building, creating a sense of place, community, and porosity where stark boundaries had previously existed.

From its inception, the Seniors First Program recognized the importance that NYCHA residents place on the older members of their communities, and challenged teams responding to each RFP to bring new focus and spatial articulation to the needs of this population. "From program space that encourages socialization to sustainability features that improve the health and wellness of its residents, Casa Celina will radiate a positive social impact in the neighborhood," comments Fernando Villa, a principal with Magnusson Architecture & Planning. "This is a great example of how we can elevate the design of affordable senior housing and reframe public housing to focus on dignity and quality of life."

Since the inception of Seniors First over five years ago, nearly a dozen projects are now in various stages, from RFP to fully occupied, many of which push the envelope on housing design in exciting directions. This includes the subtle minimalism of COOKFOX's recently completed Betances Residence, and the cascading sawtooth façade of the award-winning Sol on Park (at the Morris Houses), also designed by Magnusson Architecture & Planning. While not every project has been as adventurous as the Atrium or Casa Celina, many of these projects are also raising the bar on sustainability and resilience and, consequently, raising expectations industry-wide for what is achievable in newly constructed affordable housing.

Above: Designed by COOKFOX Architects, Betances Residence integrates biophilic elements, natural materials, and abundant daylighting for 152 supportive and affordable apartments for seniors who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness.

Part of what has made NYCHA's Senior First so successful is the intelligent way the program layers subsidies and incentives from various city agencies, including Affordable Independent Residences for Seniors boosts from the Zoning Resolution, financial resources from Housing Preservation and Development and Housing Development Corporation, and land identified as being underutilized by NYCHA. With a senior population rising faster than any other segment in the city, the biggest critiques of the program might be "more" and "faster," but ultimately it is a strong example of the forward-thinking designs and innovative communities that can be achieved when city agencies, local residents, stakeholders, architects, and developers work together to address an urgent and growing need. ■

Photo credit: Courtesy of COOKFOX Architects

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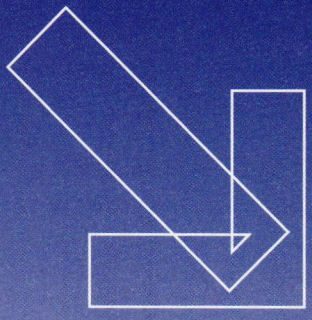

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HOUSING *IS* A VERB

A model for future developments, Karakusevic Carson Architects' Dujardin Mews in the London Borough of Enfield capitalizes on a narrow plot of brownfield land, creating 38 homes and relinking pedestrian connections in the area.

In no uncertain terms, New York City's current housing crisis is one of historic magnitude. By some estimates, there is a gap of 600,000 units, which equates to over 1.5 million people, or a population greater than the city of San Antonio, Texas. Worse, current rates of housing production suggest that gap will continue to widen. Much like every housing crisis that our city has endured, this one only became a "crisis" when it began to impact the entire market, not just low-income renters. The warning signs of unaffordability and a lack of accessibility have been present in the affordable housing sector since the last housing crisis over a decade ago, but the severe lack of housing availability is pushing all tiers of the housing market toward a breaking point. This is not simply a supply-side crisis, however, as many have suggested, and we cannot just build our way out of this. While more public dollars for affordable housing and greater housing production in general are critical, we need to resolve a great deal more to prevent the kind of cruel realities that so many New Yorkers now face.

Fifty years ago, in his seminal book *Freedom to Build*, the urban planner and housing theorist John F. C. Turner included a chapter titled "Housing as a Verb." In it he explored the semiotic opportunity presented by the word "housing," which in English can be understood as both a noun and a verb. From this observation,

Turner drew the hypothesis that rather than approach housing as a product fueled by industry, we should instead approach the production of housing as a process driven by residents, and that the outcomes of such a shift could be measured by improvements to basic quality-of-life issues, as opposed to a commodity-based set of metrics.

The recent release of "The Housing Blueprint" by the newly elected Adams Administration was met by the expected mix of support and criticism, largely focused on what is seen as a financial commitment that, while unprecedented in size, is still arguably not enough to address the crisis at hand. The blueprint's clear emphasis on process, residents, and quality-of-life issues, however, runs the risk of getting lost in this discussion. This focus is even more notable as it comes on the heels of a two-term mayoral administration that maintained hypervigilant counts on the number of housing units produced—sometimes at the expense of the same priorities the Adams housing team seeks to elevate.

We should, Turner argues, be "primarily concerned with the impact of housing activity on the lives of the housed, since these issues and problems must be better understood before the wider secondary effects on society can be properly evaluated." Turner identifies various regulatory and financial barriers to the production of housing that he sees as exclusionary practices. Classist and potentially racist motivations are veiled with claims of minimum standards meant to reinforce what the population in power thinks housing should be or look like. In allowing for more resident agency in decision-making, city government, private developers, and we, as designers, need to prepare for housing, neighborhood planning, and urban design that does not necessarily look the way we think—or thought—it should.

As housers, planners, and designers, we shouldn't think of this as an either/or equation: top-down versus bottom-up; product-minded versus process-driven. A collaborative process that involves more resident engagement and meaningful community participation in the design process makes for a far better end product. In many ways, most of us who practice in this industry would argue that housing needs to be both a noun and a verb for it to be produced in a way that actually addresses the ever-present need for decent and safe spaces that are affordable, available, and accessible.

Many of the articles in this issue seek to illustrate just that. "Street Level" features a NYC Housing Authority program rooted in collaboration at all levels, while Dr. Kristin Szylvian's piece on the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Department's Operation Breakthrough from the late '60s demonstrates a federally driven yet locally implemented program that boasted numerous innovations in housing production, which we would do well to reexamine. And Bill Millard's exploration of what we actually mean when we say "affordable housing" turns our attention to the question of "affordable to whom?"

We should be "primarily concerned with the impact of housing activity on the lives of the housed, since these issues and problems must be better understood before the wider secondary effects on society can be properly evaluated." —John F. C. Turner

This is the second year running that the Fall issue of *Oculus* has focused on the topic of housing and—given the enormity of the current crisis—housing does not appear to be a topic that is going away anytime soon. As co-chair of AIA New York Chapter's Housing Committee, and on behalf of my fellow co-chair, Peter Bafitis, we are thrilled to have been invited to participate in this issue and hope to make contributions in the years to come. In assembling the pieces presented here, we attempt to explore the process of housing production and conversations around how that process can be improved. In doing so, we endeavor to turn away from our own notions of what housing ought to be or should look like—to reject the notion that housing is a fixed number of units we need to achieve so we can consider the crisis averted, the mission accomplished, the problem solved. Instead, we challenge readers to lean into what housing is: a basic human need, a societal responsibility, a collective action, a verb.

Guest editor Brian Loughlin, AIA, APA ■

LET'S JUST CALL IT HOUSING

Architects experienced in residential design bridle at the stigmatization of "affordable housing." Is it time to rethink and retire a term with troublesome implications?

BY BILL MILLARD

A Department of Housing Preservation & Development affordable housing RFP submission by Think! Architecture & Design in Mott Haven, the Bronx

Photo credit: Think! Architecture & Design

The housing shortage is what planners call a wicked problem—difficult to solve because of social complexity, unclear requirements, and indeterminate metrics. Though Mayor Eric Adams and other officials continually address it through blueprints and programs, homelessness in New York City "has reached the highest levels since the Great Depression," according to the Coalition for the Homeless. Common Ground/Community Solutions Founder Rosanne Haggerty, a 2001 MacArthur Fellow for her achievements in combating homelessness, calls it "a slow-moving emer-

Photo credit: Think! Architecture & Design

Think!'s design for an affordable project in Brownsville, Brooklyn, under development for The Fifth Avenue Committee

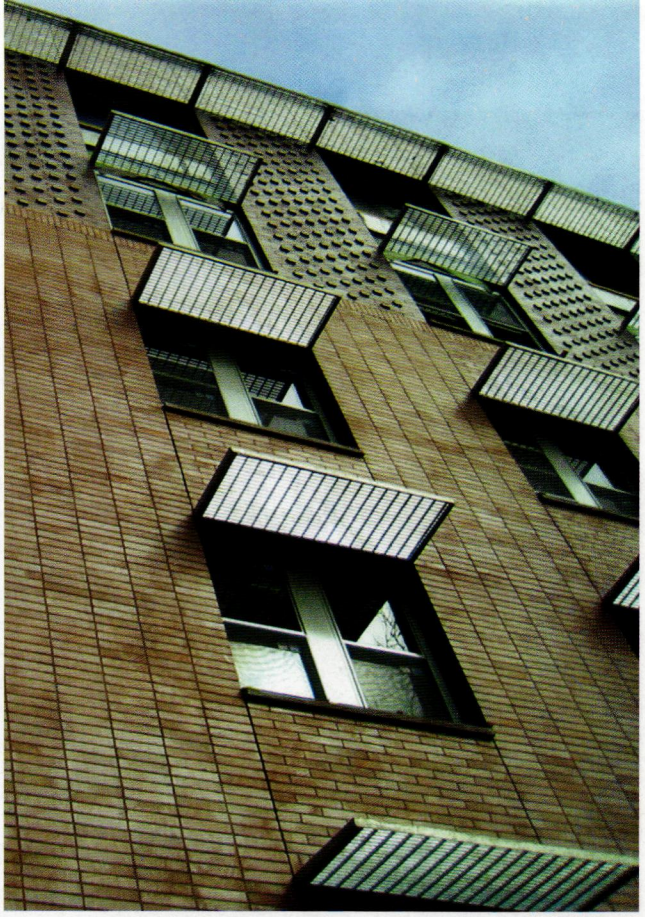
gency" requiring "the same kind of command-center intention and structure and commitment" that would be applied to "the aftermath of a hurricane."

If the lack of housing within reach of New Yorkers outside the 1% resembles a Superstorm Sandy without end, what should one make of the language denoting the housing itself? Linguists recognize the concept of *markedness*: in a binary pair of terms, the one carrying an extra mark is the subordinate or disparaged one (*e.g., healthy/unhealthy; honest/dishonest; privileged/underprivileged*). *Affordable housing* is a marked term, implying that *unaffordable* housing is actually the norm. This is both absurd and, in the housing markets of New York and many other cities, all too prevalent. Could this key term and its implicit conceptual framework be part of the problem?

STIGMATA VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

"The word *affordable* is more of a political and economic construct, which is about rental subsidies more than anything else," says Jack Esterson, AIA, principal at Think!, which has designed rentals and condos in the affordable, supportive, and market-rate sectors. He finds that the cost of building is similar regardless of the "affordability" label (soaring land costs are a different matter). Yet this term "in New York, especially in underserved communities, is met with a certain derision," mixing class prejudice with stereotypes of bare-bones detailing, an image Think! and other firms are striving to render obsolete through sophisticated design resistant to penny-pinching imperatives.

Esterson's colleague Martin Kapell, AIA, notes "there was a time when people doing that work were afraid that if their buildings looked good, they would be accused of spending frivolously and inappropriately, so the buildings all looked the same: jumbo brick with maybe a band of black brick, small windows, a lot of exterior insulation finishing systems, and through-the-wall air conditioners." Agencies prioritizing ratios of units built to dollars spent resisted better design ideas. "Even though they were perfectly justifiable programmatically and financially, it seemed like a frill," Esterson recalls. "It was an inch too much, a little too much glass, even though



Above: Marcy Avenue is one of a family of six supportive housing residences designed by Jonathan Kirschenfeld with similar building programs; they share the common feature of adapting to irregular "remnant" urban sites. Above, right: The firm's 72-unit HUD-funded Domenech Residence designed for Common Ground in Brownsville is a U-shaped building wedged into an 80-foot-wide and 155-foot-deep lot. Below, right: By running bearing walls parallel to the street, versus along the length of the Domenech courtyard, the 30-foot-wide space could then be skinned by seven-story checkerboard surfaces of Kalwall, enhancing envelope efficiency and maximizing usable space and light within units.

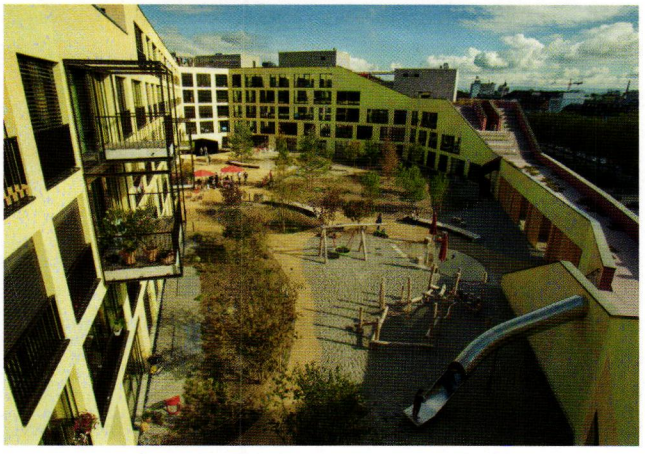
it meant a tremendous amount to our non-profit affordable clients and the people who lived in these buildings."

Institute for Public Architecture Founder Jonathan Kirschenfeld, AIA, identifies six- by 12-inch brick made of low-grade clay as "the one big tell," along with precast concrete lintels and sills. Improving on this look is not unduly costly, notes Kirschenfeld, who prefers durable Endicott iron-spot brick from Nebraska in the 12-inch Norman size, which "proportion-wise is closest to the Roman" brick used at Carnegie Hall, "even though it is less expensive than the modular." His firm's buildings in the affordable and supportive sectors bear this distinctive visual signature. When asked, "Where did you get the extra money to do your building?" Kirschenfeld typically replies, "We use the same budget everybody uses; we know *how to use* our budget." He notes, "My dictum has always been: If it looks like affordable housing, you haven't done your job."

In real estate and politics, affordable housing has a quantitative definition (consuming ≥ 30% of household income, with local subsidy criteria based on percentages of area median income). "The term 'affordable housing' has been around since the 1980s, not before," says architect/historian

Photo credits: Clockwise from top: Jason Gibbs, Breaking Ground, Paul Warchol

Photo credits: Clockwise from top: Genossenschaft Kalkbreite, Luca Zanier; Genossenschaft Kalkbreite, Volker Schopp; Genossenschaft Kalkbreite, Luca Zanier



Top: Zollhaus, the second project by the Kalbkreite housing cooperative in Zurich, was completed in 2021. The community has been praised for offering low overall rents and a wide range of apartments suitable for housing a large number of residents. Above, left: A Zollhaus residence. Above, right: The Zollhaus courtyard. The development offers a variety of living, working, retail, and cultural and community spaces.

Susanne Schindler of ETH Zürich and MIT. "It was about low- or moderate- or middle-income housing, and there was always the association with public or subsidized housing." She adds, "Talking about subsidized housing is totally wrong because the mortgage-interest deduction is the largest subsidy given to housing, which has nothing to do with a needs-based subsidy. Anybody who has a mortgage can claim it. So, basically, the biggest subsidy is given to the people who least need it."

Above: Designed by RKTB Architects, 1465 and 1473 Fifth Avenue include 52 mixed-affordable and market-rate units in a two-building development, reestablishing a block that had been left incomplete for years. Below, right: RKTB's 700 Manida Street is an eight-story building with 60 affordable housing units and 48 senior housing units in the Hunts Point neighborhood of the Bronx.

One effect of the tax system's bias favoring homeowners over renters is that when a privately owned home is a middle-class family's chief wealth-building instrument, concern over property values makes them single-issue voters who skew Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) on residential policies. AIA New York Chapter Housing Committee Co-chair Peter Bafitis, AIA, of RKTB Architects, cites New York State's failure to legalize accessory dwelling units (ADUs), "an immediate way of increasing the housing supply without really building anything," as a case in point. ADUs have been legalized in California, New Hampshire, Minneapolis, and other jurisdictions. "New York should have been leading the charge on that and hasn't," Bafitis says. Governor Kathy Hochul "demurred because of the election, because it's a hot-button issue among the suburbs."

The mortgage subsidy is economically regressive—a 2019 Brookings op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* noted that, "In 2018 almost 17% of the benefits will go to the top 1% of households, and 80% of the benefits will go to households in the top 20% of the income distribution"—yet politically popular, perennially resisting congressional austerity axes even though economists have argued it actually reduces homeownership by pushing up house prices. Though affordable-housing subsidies can carry the stigma of redistribution benefiting the poor, the mortgage subsidy

Photo credit: This page: ©Albert Vecerka/ESTO, courtesy RKTB

Photo credit: Wade Zimmerman

Completed in 1994, Sondra Thomas Senior Housing is an 87-unit building designed by James McCullar Architects as a public–private partnership for the New York City Housing Authority.

dramatically outweighs them (six times the federal aid to renters, according to one 2018 analysis). Kirschenfeld questions, "Why should we be depending on flipping our housing as our economic lifesaver" instead of having "appropriate wages that allow us to build a nest egg?" He suggests a simple policy tweak: "Renters should be given a tax break, just like homeowners."

A COMMODIFIED HUMAN RIGHT

Language that steers priorities and shapes assumptions is only part of the story. "Affordable housing" masks confusion over just what housing constitutes: a right that communities and civilizations guarantee to all people, or an economic entity to be bought, sold, hoarded, privatized, financialized, and withdrawn through eviction. It can be either one; the contexts affecting which sense prevails are, inevitably, uncomfortably political.

The United Nations's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the U.S. among its original signatories in 1948, includes a right to adequate housing, yet a 1972 Supreme Court decision, *Lindsey v. Normet*, denied it the status of a constitutional right. Bafitis notes that "what created public housing in the '30s, '40s, and '50s was an enormous federal investment in it, and that spigot was turned off in the '70s and '80s, and it's been languishing ever since." Since efforts to provide housing broadly through direct federal subsidies ended, replaced by a patchwork of public programs aimed at mobilizing private markets, commentators across political spectra agree that current arrangements have not yielded enough construction. From the 2008 recession through the pandemic, Bafitis adds, housing construction has been particularly weak, leading to "an unaffordability crisis across middle America," becoming increasingly visible in the mainstream.

James McCullar, FAIA, recipient of the AIA's 2019 Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Architecture, views the evolution of New York's public housing as a narrative of initial promise declining into mismanagement, exacerbated by local discontinuities. "When I first started doing work in the city, even in the 1970s," he says, "the public housing developments were oases of calm and landscape and maintenance. The areas around them were dilapidated for abandonment and lack of maintenance; those that were occupied were in poor condition. But as time went on, the reverse happened. The best housing is integrated into its community," and Corbusian towers in parks usually stood apart. (Stuyvesant Town strikes him as an exception, maintaining working-class demographics rather than concentrating the most underprivileged.)

McCullar cites excessive focus on cost as one reason New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings have acquired a bad image. In the late 1970s his firm rehabilitated an abandoned South Bronx tenement, 1660 Andrews Avenue; his Art Deco design won an AIANY design award and earned praise from the *Times*. McCullar recalls, "The deputy manager of NYCHA, who was a hardcore affordable-housing guy, a cheap-housing guy, said to me, 'My God, you got a design award; you must have spent too much money on this. You have to understand that public housing is the minimum expense.' He actually gave us a hard time about that."

The scale and structure of NYCHA, McCullar suggests, militate against efficient management as well as aesthetics and amenities, and he speculates that smaller organizations would outperform New York's large regulatory apparatus. He points to Houston's relative successes, in a setting lacking both rent regulation and government-sponsored housing, but featuring "varying degrees of affordability," along with a housing-first policy and a high degree of social-service coordination through its Coalition for the Homeless. He also cites Singapore, which combines ample publicly built housing with a mandatory 401K-like program allowing residents to apply their savings to housing purchases, attaining a very low citywide rate of homelessness.

Another early example of a forward-thinking housing solution, this 1929 abandoned tenement building at 1660 Andrews Avenue in the South Bronx was transformed into residences for 59 low-income families in 1986. The project was designed by James McCullar Architects in partnership with Shelly Kroop Architect to preserve the exterior character of the original building while updating the interiors to modern accessibility and security standards.

There is no shortage of arguments that privatization and deregulation would align incentives for more new construction. Others have less confidence that markets can respond appropriately. "My counter to those who say, 'Capitalism with free reign would solve these problems,'" says Esterson, is, "You have to look at the record. It hasn't." After the federal commitment to public housing collapsed during the Nixon and Reagan administrations, "capitalists had the chance to fix it; it did not happen, and homelessness went through the roof. The free market is having a very difficult time right now building *middle*-income housing, which is another crisis in New York. Middle-income families have a really hard time; rents are crazy, they're not wealthy enough to afford good housing, and yet they're not poor enough to qualify for low-income housing, so they are stuck in the middle, and the free market has not been kind to them."

ALTERNATIVE MECHANISMS, ABROAD AND HERE

Schindler points to "the so-called third way of non-profit housing," separate from the restrictions of public-sector housing and the instabilities of markets, as a variant with a promising track record overseas. Zürich has a century-long tradition of non-profit housing, including cooperatives that charge a "cost rent" based on "just what it costs to operate this housing, to put away funds for capital improvements in the future," without either income caps or a primary motive to appreciate in market value and generate wealth. The return on residents' investment is paid not in cash but in a "use value dividend," including a lifelong right to stay and participate in community governance. Cooperative organizations control about 9% of Zürich's buildable land (preserving it from speculation and reducing gentrification) and 18% of its housing stock. Schindler has studied the possibility of similar systems in Boston, which has a stronger history of co-ops than most American cities, though institutional support would be essential to scale up the model.

For Zürich's model to translate to the U.S., she acknowledges, it would have to overcome the association between housing and personal wealth. "Housing as an asset," she observes, "this whole American dream of owning something is so central not just to people's imaginations, but to how people save for retirement." That linkage is a solution to some and a deeply entrenched problem for others, entangled with the history of racial bias. "Those who have owned housing for 100 years have been able to pass it down through generations, and that has created this enormous discrepancy between Black and white households, because Black households were explicitly excluded from homeownership." Racial redlining is one of many reasons

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Designed by Karakusevic Carson Architects, Dujardin Mews was the first social housing to be built directly by the London Borough of Enfield for nearly 40 years. The project forms the first phase of the wider Ponders End program, which will create replacement homes for the neighboring Alma Estate and sets a new benchmark for future redevelopment in the borough.

Designed and delivered following significant community engagement in the London Borough of Hackney, the first two phases of the Kings Crescent Estate Masterplan by Karakusevic Carson Architects combine carefully refurbished and new social housing within an ambitious public realm and civic amenities. Importantly for a project of its kind, the design is tenure-blind, with social rent, locally affordable, and market-rate homes mixed seamlessly throughout the masterplan.

why American housing history has suffered from the tension between "two contradictory policy goals: building wealth through housing, and affordability. Those two things basically cancel each other out."

In London, a localized public-sector model offers encouraging case studies. Paul Karakusevic, founding partner of Karakusevic Carson Architects, has worked with 15 of London's 32 borough councils on projects that have redefined council estates as dignified, well-planned communities reflecting residents' ideas and desires, after a period when social housing connoted top-down design and underfunded decrepitude. "Approximately 15 years ago," he says, "Gordon Brown, Labour prime minister, brought back lawmaking to allow for the local government and local councils to invest in the housing stock and in building new, truly affordable housing for local residents. That was the seismic moment in the post-neoliberal era. By allowing the public sector to borrow again to build fabulous, solid affordable housing, local authorities reentered the housing sector, which had been frozen out for circa 30 years." Direct management by the democratically elected councils "maximizes the value capture for the public sector. It means they're in control—their residents are closer to the action and decision-making."

It is a painstaking yet productive process, he notes: "We will meet our residents on a project 30, 40, 50, 100 times from the beginning of the process to the detailed drawings, the fit-out drawings of the flats, and the design of the lobbies." Meetings address not just master plans at the outset but "kitchen finishes and tiles in the bathroom," deepening trust that years of neglect had eroded. Many of these projects are mid-rise blocks, either reconditioned or replaced by new buildings, three to seven miles outside central London amid parkland and other amenities, typically with a density of 150 to 300 dwellings per two-and-a-half acres. Some residents are comfortable in larger towers, 14 to 25 stories high, enjoying views, quiet, and air quality, provided the lifts and other details are maintained. Tellingly, Karakusevic's book *Public Housing Works* (Lund Humphries, 2021) includes a section called "Dwellings, Not Units," reflecting a conscious choice of a human-centered term.

Karakusevic shared his experiences with NYCHA officials and New York-based architects at AIANY's "Public Housing, Practice, and Design" symposium last June. He views NYCHA as a unique city asset, "one of the ultimate housing and architectural challenges, probably, in the world," with "incredible opportunities of extension, deep refurbishment, façade improvements, thermal upgrading, and ground-floor improvements. The functionality and the retention of that stock is absolutely key to allow the city to function as well as possible for the next 200 years." Believ-

ing deeply that "public housing should be city infrastructure," he is encouraged by the city's new Public Housing Preservation Trust as a mechanism for long-term bond sales to support necessary renovation, construction, and preservation from disruptive speculation. Citing economist Mariana Mazzucato's work on varieties of valuation, he says, "When the city stays in control of its assets, it is definitely much more than financial—it is *social value*."

Perhaps the most intriguing third-way institutions recognizing social value over marketable value are community land trusts (CLTs), separating land ownership from building or residence ownership. A CLT "can freeze the land value, which is typically what drives up the value of the home," Schindler says. "It's the location, the land, the real estate—not the structure itself—and that's very similar to the Swiss model." CUNY urban planner Cassim Shepard's recent *Places* article on CLTs finds 17 of them in the city (including the Mott Haven/Port Morris Land Stewards) and nearly 300 nationwide, in 47 states and the District of Columbia.

"When the city stays in control of its assets, it is definitely much more than financial—it is *social value*." — Paul Karakusevic

Challenges for the CLT model, Schindler says, include getting traction with funding institutions, developing technical and managerial expertise, defining what communities they represent, and acquiring land. Government could encourage CLTs by establishing mortgage insurance, assuring banks that loans to a CLT are secure, and allocating tax-foreclosed properties to them, subject to appropriate oversight. Although some CLTs grew from autonomous grassroots organizations resistant to government, she says, "It's an illusion to think you can get anywhere by completely separating yourself from the market or the state. You're always implicated in this world, and the long-term affordability is assured by the fact that the land can no longer be speculated with."

Kirschenfeld looks nostalgically at the period when New Yorkers "were the innovators, not just for housing but for who pays for housing. These were labor unions; these were pension funds; the U.S. government was in the housing business. We've lost a lot in making every project in New York a public-private partnership, because that's an abdication of responsibility, aside from the fact that housing should be a right." He energetically advocates CLTs as innovators in the next evolutionary stage of housing, and from his work with the Mott Haven CLT, he recalls a representative of the city's Health and Hospitals system, which owned a building in the CLT's catchment area, implicitly linking those two rights. "Health and Hospitals came out with a very, very interesting nugget," Kirschenfeld recalls. "They said if there was anything we could prescribe to our patients, it would be housing." A stable residence is a well-known contributor to health, particularly for persons who have endured a period of homelessness. There is an intuitive logic to reframing residences as a component of public health infrastructure, calling for the expertise of not-for-profits in health and adjacent fields.

Nadine Maleh, housing systems director at Community Solutions, notes the implications of the components of social support networks, in both terminology and substance. "We have a homeless response system: think about that," she says. "We don't have a housing system. We have a healthcare system; we talk about healthcare as the benefit, like you're going in for preventive care, you're going in to be healthy. It's not like we have a 'sick care' or a 'sick system.'" Noting that everyone outside the "1% who don't need mortgages" benefits from various social institutions (e.g., financial, medical, judicial), Maleh calls attention to how they overlap in ways rarely perceived by people who have never fallen through the gaps. While working in the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice several years ago, she once voluntarily spent the night at Bellevue Hospital during a code-blue night, when overnight temperatures are below freezing, observing intake procedures. About 90% of the men she encountered had come from Rikers Island. Just as public health specialists understand that prevention is more effective than responding to medical problems after they've become urgent, institutions operating on the adjacent fronts of housing, criminal justice, and mental health perform better in a preventive than a reactive mode, and better when coordinated than when siloed.

Maleh's colleague Rosanne Haggerty recalls that Jane Jacobs habitually accentuated the positive. "*Death and Life* and other books that resonate in terms of telling us what we love about cities and our homes don't talk about income," she says. Instead, the focus is on "belonging, agency, relationship to an environment that makes us feel a sense of familiarity and security." The useful questions about reinvigorated buildings, she says, aren't, "What are the incomes of the people who happen to live there?" They are, "Are they well-designed? Are they thoughtful in the way they operate in their context? Are they welcoming, and is there some accountability? If there's a problem, will someone show up? What kind of community do we want, and what's going to make it feel that way? How do we include everyone? How do we start with the end state in mind: a place where nobody's homeless, where no one's rent-burdened, where the buildings are safe, where people feel a sense of connection and belonging? That has nothing to do with economics." ■

THINKING BIGGER ABOUT HOUSING

Moving forward during this pivotal and precarious time for housing in our city requires a holistic approach.

BY MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

Photo credit: Sam Lahoz

Michael Kimmelman gives the keynote at NYC's Housing Crisis conference.

On May 13, 2022, New York Times *architecture critic Michael Kimmelman delivered the keynote address at NYC's Housing Crisis, a day-long conference sponsored by the AIA New York Chapter and* Architectural Record *at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library, the newly renovated Midtown branch of New York Public Library. The text of the keynote follows.*

I am so glad we are gathered here because, like you, I am extremely worried. I am worried because, with all the problems we face, and there are many, there is no bigger or more urgent crisis with greater ripple effects in New York today than the affordable housing shortage. And I also worry about the state of our participatory democracy. I worry we are losing the melody of our cosmopo-

lis—forgetting what it takes to accomplish really big things together. It begins with getting different interested parties and public authorities together and having a robust, honest, constructive conversation.

New York has historically seized on crises and transformed them into opportunities. That has been our secret sauce—the source of our reputation as a great, forward-thinking metropolis of modernity and hope. We screw up—slum clearance, Hudson Yards—or we are screwed—9/11, COVID—and somehow we eventually stumble to a better place. It used to take months for a restaurant to get a permit from the city to do outdoor dining, and removing even a single parking space from the streets would trigger the Battle of the Somme from car owners. But city officials granted 10,000 permits and removed even more parking spaces overnight when COVID threatened to bankrupt the restaurant industry. Streateries have transformed neighborhoods, rich and poor, all across the city, reminding New Yorkers that our streets have not always looked the way they do; that they are not, in fact, the property of car owners but are public spaces; and that they can be reimagined and remade with remarkable speed when we have the will and imagination. That isn't only true for outdoor dining.

In the 18th century, we poisoned the Collect Pond in Lower Manhattan, which was the main freshwater source for colonial and early American New Yorkers, leading to deadly outbreaks of cholera. And, in response, we established what is today the city's largest bank to underwrite vast new sewer and water systems. These allowed for the creation of Central Park, the New York Public Library at 42nd Street, and much else whose architecture derived from the network of aqueducts and reservoirs we created to make up for our insane idea of putting tanneries next to our water supply. During the 20th century, with the collapse of the shipping business and the city's industrial waterfront—New York's lifeblood since Henry Hudson first set his eyes on the island of Mannahatta—we diversified our economy, cleaned up our air and water, and reimagined our coastlines. The housing crisis, it seems to me, is a similar, slow-evolving disaster.

When I moved back to New York from Europe a decade ago to start my job as the *Times* architecture critic, affordable housing was at the top of my list of issues to address because it clearly seemed the biggest problem in the city. The first thing I wrote about was an affordable housing project in the South Bronx, Via Verde. In highlighting that building, I wanted to make the point that design and architecture were part of the city's housing crisis—but also part of any solution. I tried to weigh the building's premium on high-end architecture against the number of additional apartments that might hypothetically have been built with that same money. How do we judge value versus cost? What is the value of dignity, pride, durability, and equity in the things we build? These are things architecture can bring to the affordable housing equation.

But architecture is not where this conversation needs to begin. And it is not where we are starting today. Architects can challenge us to think in new ways; they model a culture of collaboration, and they love cooking up fantasies of, say, turning New York's inventory of small, odd, leftover lots of public land into affordable housing projects, whether or not the economics pencil out. Renderings can be inspiring. But the reality is that millions of rent-burdened New Yorkers today are spending a third to a half or more of their incomes on rent—and some are hot-bedding in Queens,

Climate change is not going to wait for us to get our act together.

where 11 people died during Hurricane Ida when their illegal basement apartments flooded. So before we talk about architecture and redesigning basements, we ought to do some basic things. We can start by expanding our allowable accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and incentivize homeowners with basements and garages to renovate their properties. California made ADUs legal, and in Los Angeles ADUs now account for more than 20% of new housing. If California can do it, New York surely can, too.

The last mayor promised to make the construction and preservation of subsidized housing a top priority, and he kept a running tab on the number of apartments that his administration could claim. In doing so, however, he seemed to regard housing as if it were separable from all the things that comprise a neighborhood, which are the things that make a house a home: safe, walkable streets; access to public transit; quality schools and jobs; libraries; healthcare; parks and plazas; food; and culture. We need to think holistically when we talk about housing and rezoning to allow for more subsidized housing. And we need to think in terms of communities, not just units. And we really need to think bigger.

We have a new mayor, and so a chance to reenergize the public conversation. It's hard not to look back and lament all the ways we got ourselves into this mess—all the bad decisions, the power imbalances, and the subservience to private luxury developers in the pathetic hope of eking some public benefits in the form of affordable units out of them, such as the failure of not wrestling more subsidized apartments out of Hudson Yards, for example. Going further back in time, we can lament the selling-off of much publicly-owned land for a song during the '80s and '90s,

Photo credit: Sam Lahoz

Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso addresses the crowd before a discussion with, left to right: Marc Norman, Associate Dean of the NYU Schack Institute of Real Estate; Lisa Gomez, CEO of L+M Development Partners; and Muzzy Rosenblatt, CEO and President of the Bowery Residents' Committee.

which we could desperately use now for large-scale affordable housing developments. I would argue we still have some room if we are creative. I've done the math, and I believe Manhattan has an average density of 640 residents per acre. There's a public golf course in the Bronx. It's 198 acres. You may have heard of it. By my count, 640 x 198 = 126,720 people who could be housed. I'm just saying.

And, along the same lines, for reasons that remain mysterious to me, we continue to be cowed by the owner of an aging sports arena that sits atop the Western Hemisphere's busiest and arguably most miserable and dangerous rail station. The station serves 600,000 working people a day, in a neighborhood that does not need a dozen more humongous office towers that no one will go to, but could sustain an abundance of mixed-income housing in concert with a more robust pedestrian-friendly public realm.

WHOSE CITY IS THIS?

Our COVID streateries aside, I think we have become cautious, defeatist, distracted, divided, sclerotic. NIMBYs often pose as preservationists. A kind of Jane Jacobs-style "People Power," which arose in response to Robert Moses's "Powers That Be," I think too often default to a rigid stance of anti-development. A decade has passed since Superstorm Sandy, which devastated low-income housing developments along the East River—and we have just begun the renovation of East River Park, a project that has riven the neighborhood along racial and class lines, and barely begins to deal with the threat of rising seas in Lower Manhattan. Climate change is not going to wait for us to get our act together. Many of you will recall how, a few years ago, activists in Upper Manhattan derailed a 15-story, 355-unit residence on the site of a derelict garage. The project involved a rezoning. The city's new Mandatory Inclusionary Housing rules required that at least 20% of the units had to be below market rate for a rezoned development. By the way, that number should be much higher than 20% and the affordability requirements much deeper. In any case, the developer was free to put up a 14-story building with no affordable apartments. But in return for the rezoned extra square footage, the developer volunteered to make half of the units—178 of them—rent-subsidized. And opponents still took to the streets, declaring the construction of any new market-rate housing to be "an existential threat to our homes and our community." The project died.

I understand fears about displacement and losing our neighborhoods. But cities are dynamic and collective organisms. They require sacrifice and involve change. My fear is that we have lost our ability to come together around progress, even to imagine that coming together is possible. We take to the barricades to protest nearly every building proposal. This is not entirely new, of course, but I think the tone has changed. And I think it's part of a wider pessimism and despair that is a product of the divisions in our country.

Having said that, promising things happen all the time, and I try to make it part of my job to write about them. Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) has been producing affordable housing projects. I wrote about one the other day, a new, deeply subsidized development for seniors in the South Bronx. I also wrote about the renovations at Baychester, a Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) project by NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA), again in the Bronx, which turned a decrepit, crime-plagued assortment of leaky, crumbling buildings into a leafy campus of playgrounds and refurbished apartments. Glassed-in entrances replaced old carceral doorways. There are new lobbies, new light fixtures in the hallways, new recycling rooms and compactors, and new bathroom fixtures, windows, and kitchen appliances. It's mostly cosmetic. It's not architecture with a capital A. And we'll have to keep an eye on how the place is managed and maintained. But I gather NYCHA was spending $14,000 a year per unit, pouring cash into deteriorating properties. The new managers are spending $9,000 per apartment. Their costs are lower because the buildings have been upgraded to meet current energy standards and require less maintenance. I've talked to a bunch of tenants, and they're surprised and happy.

They were frightened and skeptical beforehand, and who could blame them? They feared displacement, and who could blame them? The history of NYCHA is a trail of broken promises, false hopes, and abandonment. RAD seemed yet another ruse, which threatened privatization, since NYCHA, by implicitly acknowledging that it was no longer capable of maintaining its properties, was handing over maintenance and renovations to private interests—and on social media and by word of mouth, misinformation about RAD spread like wildfire. And NYCHA, not surprisingly, struggled to counter the narrative.

As I understand it, NYCHA still owns and oversees RAD properties, tenants can't be displaced unless they fail to pay their rent, private managers can be replaced if they don't do a good job, and no apartment can be converted to market rate if a tenant moves out. Is RAD ideal? No. Not all developers are good actors. If NYCHA hasn't been good at overseeing properties, why would it be good at policing private developers and managers? I don't know. Should the richest nation on Earth build, fund, and run a great public housing system? Yes. And America should also establish a universal right to housing. But in the meantime, hundreds of thousands of NYCHA tenants continue to wait for improvements. Residents at Edenwald, the NYCHA development across the street from Baychester, saw what Baychester got and asked for more of the same. "Seeing is believing," the president of Edenwald said to me.

I understand fears about displacement and losing our neighborhoods. But cities are dynamic and collective organisms. They require sacrifice and involve change.

That's the bottom line. We need to get thousands of underserved people affordably, humanely, securely housed. I have been spending time in Houston, the nation's fourth largest and, it claims, most diverse city, which, a decade ago, had one of the worst homeless problems in the country. I want to end with this anecdote. Since 2012, Houston has cut its homeless count by 63%. A decade ago, a homeless veteran in Houston waited 720 days and had to navigate 76 bureaucratic steps to get from the street into permanent supportive housing. Today, the wait for housing is 32 days.

How has Houston accomplished this? And, no—I hasten to say to the crowd here—the lack of zoning is not the answer. It really isn't. Officials there will tell you, rightly or wrongly, that the lack of zoning, if anything, is a problem, because it doesn't allow officials to enforce affordability, and meanwhile they've got plenty of NIMBYs and covenants and other obstructions.

As best as I can tell, they have done it by coming together. City and county officials, service providers, landlords, downtown business leaders—organizations, politicians, non-profits who ordinarily bicker and compete—have come to the conclusion that they share an interest in fixing the problem, which has trumped their differences. Not everybody is on board, but key players are, including the mayor.

The system is still precarious. Progress is halting and incremental, and Houston is coming up against some of the same affordable housing problems that New York faces. But the city's success shows us what can happen when businesses, non-profits, and civic and community leaders seek common ground around a problem like housing.

I'll say it again. Surely, New York can do the same—or better. ■

Oculus *thanks Michael Kimmelman for permission to reprint these remarks.*

OPERATION BREAKTHROUGH'S FORGOTTEN PROTOTYPE COMMUNITIES

The most ambitious federal housing program you've never heard of

BY KRISTIN SZYLVIAN

Operation Breakthrough (OB), the most comprehensive housing program of the Civil Rights era, had an incredibly short policy shelf life and quickly disappeared from public view and discussion. Who created OB, and why did its nine experimental communities have such a limited impact on the housing market, federal housing policy, and historical memory? Are there lessons from OB that might be applicable to today's housing market, as resources are invested in 3D printed houses, mini-houses, the adaptive reuse of shipping containers, and other ideas?

ROMNEY'S SIGNATURE PROGRAM

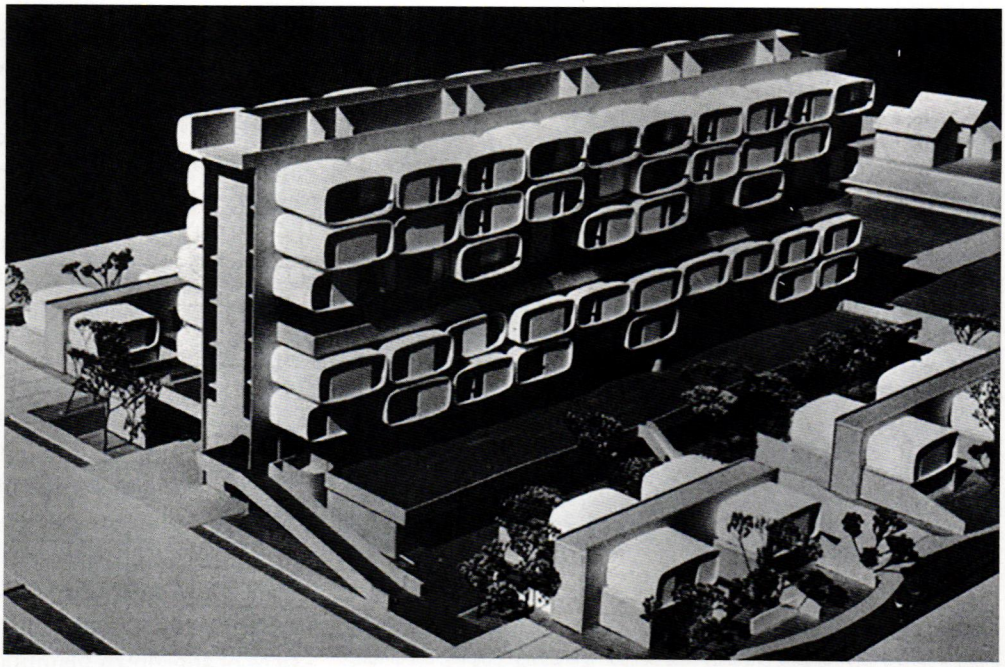
George Romney announced OB in May 1969, four months after joining President Richard Nixon's cabinet as secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Romney advocated a systems analyst approach to the production of housing for low- and middle-income markets. His goal was to remove the obstacles preventing the U.S. from utilizing technological innovation to increase housing production and stabilize costs. Romney recruited Harold B. Finger, a systems analyst for the National Air and Space Administration (NASA), to serve as assistant secretary for research and technology and oversee OB.

OB's Phase I began when HUD invited housing manufacturers, architects, engineers, and designers to submit designs for different types of single-family and multifamily factory-built housing, and compete for a grant from HUD's $15 million research and technology budget. During Phase II, the manufacturers with the most promising designs—the winners of the Phase I competition—would work with a private developer to build an assigned number of dwellings at one or more of 11 prototype communities nationwide.

The goal of Phase III was volume production. Romney planned to break new ground in federal housing policy by introducing a system of market assembly not unlike the healthcare insurance "exchanges" created during the Obama Administration. Market aggregation specialists working at state and regional levels would help publicly and privately funded developers with similar housing needs keep their building costs to a minimum by jointly negotiating with one or more manufacturers. Market assembly would help new and established firms reach economies of scale and stabilize their prices. Organized labor had proposed market aggregation during World War II, and it had been temporarily implemented during the postwar veterans' housing emergency, with the support of President Harry S. Truman.

Romney created OB a year after the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and his successful campaign as the Republican Governor of Michigan to secure passage of the state's first fair housing law. As a result, it was much more than an effort to industrialize house building. Romney quietly accepted the politically perilous responsibility of leading the nation into the uncharted territory of equal opportunity housing. OB's prototype communities would show the nation—and the world—what a post-Jim Crow residential neighborhood could and should look like. Federally subsidized development

would require private sector contractors participating in federal housing subsidy programs to train and hire minorities from the local area, with the ultimate goal of attaining the benefits of union membership. Opportunities for minority contracting and investment would emerge. Romney expected OB to buttress his effort to transform the four-year-old, cabinet-level department into a technologically savvy, research-oriented source of expertise on national economic development and urban policy that had outgrown its New Deal, social work origins. The rebranding of HUD would result in Congressional budgetary allocations that more closely approximated the department's needs and legislative and programmatic obligations.



An Operation Breakthrough spun fiberglass proposal by Spuntech Housing Corporation. The program combined a competition to identify promising approaches to industrialized building with a federal effort to aggregate a market for these new models of housing.

ROOTED IN THE GREAT SOCIETY PROGRAM

Romney found a mandate for his goal of fundamentally altering low- and middle-income housing production in the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, one of the signature bills of President Lyndon B. Johnson's outgoing administration. Dubbed the "Magna Carta of housing," it established the goal of 26 million units of new or rehabilitated units of housing in a decade. The purpose of the law's Section 108, "New Technologies in the Development of Housing for Lower Income Families," was to "encourage the use of new housing technologies" and "large-scale experimentation in the use of such technologies." It authorized the HUD secretary to approve up to five public or private research demonstration projects featuring promising new technologies that would be tested on at least 1,000 units a year for five years, which would presumably provide an adequate test of the hypothesis. The target figure of 5,000 dwellings was an estimate for the production needed to reach an economy of scale for the manufacture of detached, single-family dwellings. Backers of Section 108 hoped the experimental dwellings would serve as models for housing provided under the public housing, urban renewal, Model Cities, or New Communities programs.

Romney hitched OB's wagon to what was arguably the 1968 law's most liberal and controversial provision: mortgage interest subsidies. He expected low- and middle-income households that qualified for the mortgage interest subsidy program, authorized under the National Housing Act's Section 235, to constitute the bulk of the customers for dwellings built by OB participants. Residential developers that purchased OB housing could seek mortgage interest subsidy payments under the Section 236 program.

It was much more than an effort to industrialize house building. Romney quietly accepted the politically perilous responsibility of leading the nation into the uncharted territory of equal opportunity housing.

Romney's approach to the legislative directives contained in the 1968 housing law reinforced the Nixon Administration's program of New Federalism. He increased federal reliance on state government for the building, marketing, and management of low- and middle-income housing by the private sector. HUD encouraged the small firms that had historically built, financed, and marketed the bulk of U.S. homes to join consortia with large multinational corporations when seeking an OB grant from HUD. Grant

Photo credit: Belveron Real Estate Partners and LIHC Investment Group

An Operation Breakthrough development that was rehabilitated in 2018, Summit Plaza is Jersey City's largest privately held Section 8 housing complex, comprising a 483-unit property for senior and vulnerable residents.

recipients were to produce a prototype of at least one kind of commonly produced dwelling, including mid-rise, multiunit apartments; garden apartments; semi-detached town houses; and detached dwellings. Romney wanted OB's prototype houses to become "so well-known and popular that public and private groups will be eager to become involved in their utilization."

PLANNING THE PROTOTYPE COMMUNITIES

The department planned to test the quality of the design and construction of the dwellings designed and constructed by 26 housing systems providers at 11 regional prototype communities in Jersey City, NJ; Macon, GA; Memphis; St. Louis; Seattle; King County, WA; Sacramento, CA; Indianapolis; Kalamazoo, MI; New Castle County, DE; and Clear Lake in Houston. Working through a private sector developer, HUD expected to sell or lease the prototype dwellings with the understanding that federal housing officials would continue to monitor their durability, energy consumption, and overall performance. One observer recalled that OB was "heralded as the Cape Canaveral of the housing industry," a reference to the Florida space center.

HUD required local governing bodies to vote to confirm their willingness to host a prototype community and agree to grant exemptions from local or regional plans, zoning laws, and building codes. The Operation Breakthrough cities were neither required nor discouraged from conducting hearings or providing a period for public comment on participation in OB. HUD selected a local or regional private developer to take ownership of each site and oversee its construction. The department also contracted a "notable" planning firm for each prototype community. The planners were responsible to "coordinate the plans of housing producers, integrating three to seven different brands and types of housing, including a combination of single-family homes, town houses, garden apartments, and mid-rise and high-rise apartment towers" into a coherent plan. The site plan would link the new community to the surrounding neighborhood and rectify the "injustices of top-down planning" that had physically isolated publicly subsidized housing in the past.

The planners' goal was to "achieve economies and innovation in layout of roads, utilities, and services" and bring about the "harmonious linking of the given site with the surrounding community." Their site plan would result in "a harmonious mix of housing types, family income levels, and lifestyles." Most sites would feature four or five different housing systems. Sacramento's prototype community presented its planners—Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons Inc.—with the challenge of seven different housing systems.

THE PROMISE OF A NEW LIFESTYLE

The two urban projects—Summit Plaza in Jersey City and Edison Park in Memphis—featured mid-rise apartment buildings, a community center, an outdoor recreation area, resident and guest parking, and pedestrian walkways. The former was located a short distance away from public transportation links to Manhattan; the latter was adjacent to a growing medical center.

Romney hitched Operation Breakthrough's wagon to what was arguably the Housing and Urban Development Act's most liberal and controversial provision: mortgage interest subsidies.

Seven prototype communities were located in outlying urban or suburban areas where accessible housing was scarce. Planned Unit Development (PUD), a planning approach then gaining popularity, clustered dwelling units together, allowing for open space and the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Park Lafayette in Indianapolis marketed itself as a "new

type of community," where prospective residents would benefit from "dramatic new building technologies never before available to bring down the cost of 'living it up.'" Sacramento's Greenfair offered "a new and innovative concept" that supported a "whole new way of living." Its sales flyer featured drawings of racial and ethnic minorities, families with children, and the elderly harmoniously enjoying "Leisure time Living" in an "inside the city" location. New Horizon Village, Kalamazoo's prototype, called itself "Tomorrow's Family Community...For Today's Living!" at a time when fixed class and color lines divided the city's neighborhoods. OB would help the "urban poor" get "out of the inner city and live closer to job opportunities as plants and offices spring up in outlying areas," a news weekly predicted.

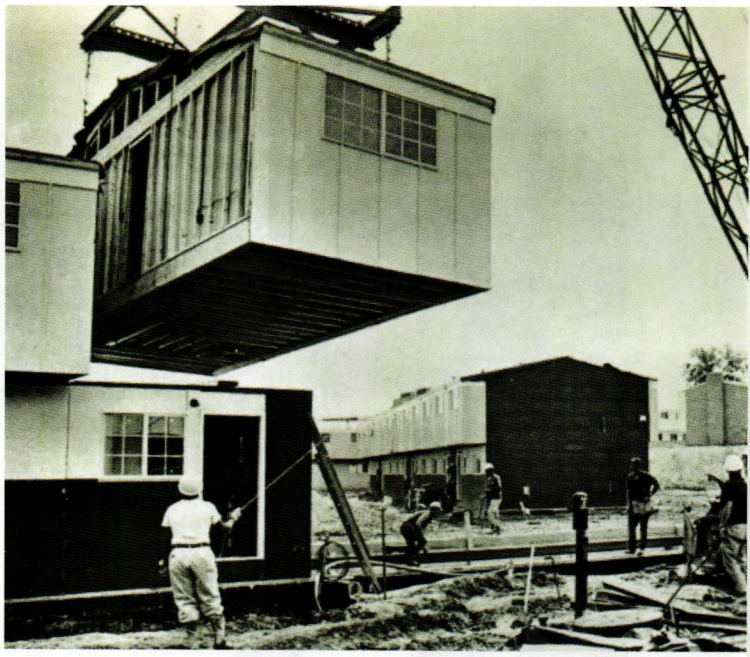
BREAKING THROUGH OBSTACLES

Romney pursued breakthroughs in the design, construction, and marketing of manufactured housing, while tackling other persistent problems facing the manufactured housing industry. Delegates to the meeting of the American Federation of Labor's Building Council booed him at a May 1969 meeting for criticizing the union for its unwillingness to accommodate its work rules to technological change. Help arrived from an unexpected source organized labor and civil rights activist—Walter Reuther—at a time when the United Automobile Workers Union was cutting its historic

Romney pursued breakthroughs in the design, construction, and marketing of manufactured housing, while tackling other persistent problems facing the manufactured housing industry.

ties with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). In June 1969 Reuther told the *Detroit News* that trade unions had "more to gain than anyone else in America" from the rise of industrialized housing production and "ought to be leading the fight." The industrial building systems would not take work away from the trade unions, he explained, but ultimately give them "more work, more membership, and year-round employment."

On June 3, days after Reuther's comments were published, the AFL-allied Detroit Building Trades Council announced plans to organize workers employed in industrialized housing plants. The *New York Times* called the



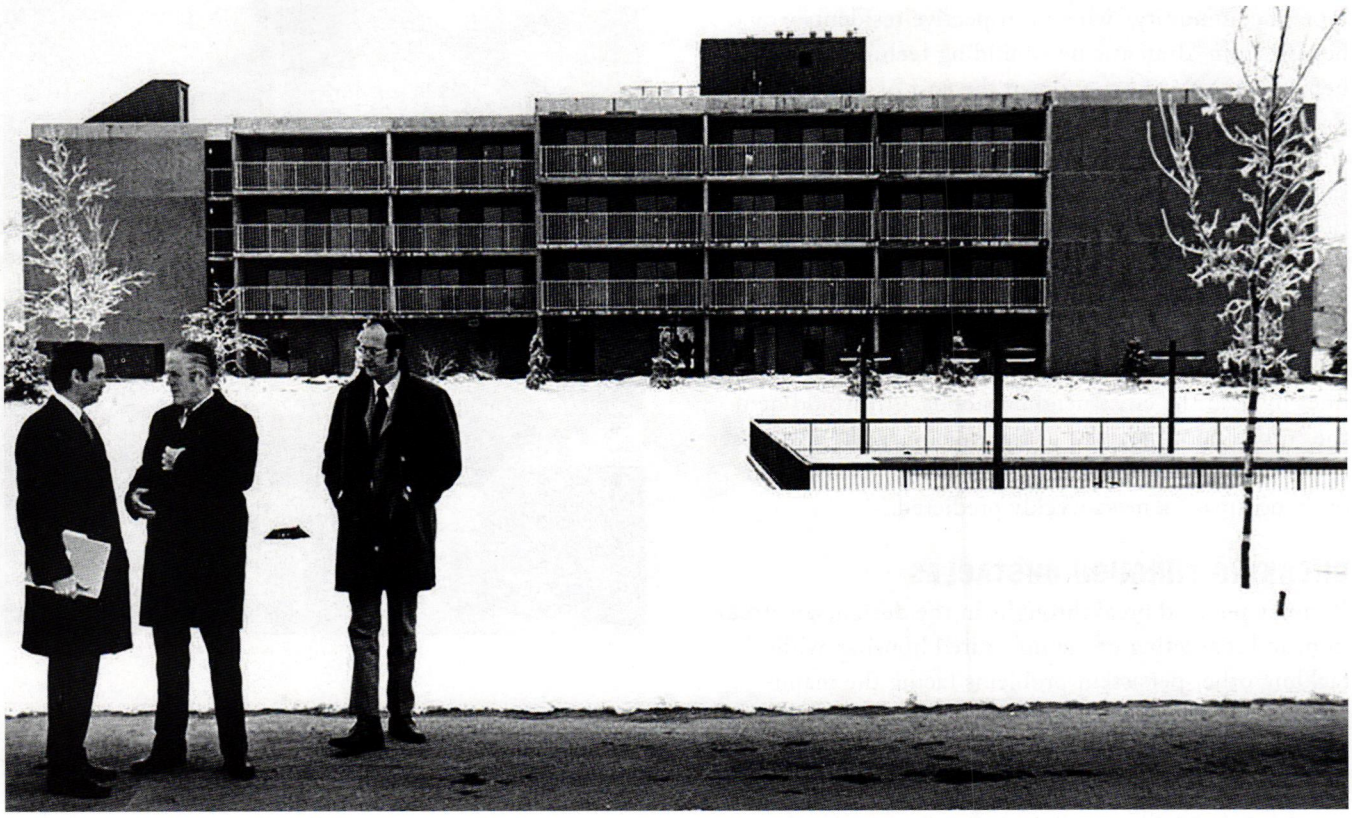
A Stirling Homex building module. The company's prefabricated construction techniques included a wood-frame modular system that allowed large boxes to be stacked to create housing.

move "history-making." Shortly after, the 900,000 members signed a precedent-setting national agreement with the Stirling Homex Corporation to cover its factory assembly and on-site erection work. The Stirling Homex agreement precipitated what one builder called "something of a revolution" in labor relations because, up until that time, the craft unions had "insisted jealously and militantly" that all work had to be performed on-site by union members. The creation of an 11-week, 485-hour training program for unemployed minority construction workers co-sponsored by the National Urban League suggested that the United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners had begun to accommodate itself to economic, political, and social change.

HUD issued guidelines in 1969 to assist OB's contractors in the "planning, programming, and implementing of the 'people-related' elements," of their work, including the "utilization of minority and locally-owned business concerns" and "manpower training of minority and indigenous residents of the areas." Until Assistant Secretary for Equal Opportunity Samuel J. Simmons and his staff acted to correct the problem, HUD had no guidelines that stated in detail what the contractors should do in order to comply.

In 1972, OB Director Arthur S. Newburg reported to the National Association of Minority Contractors that HUD's guidelines for "hiring, entrepreneurship opportunities, and housing went beyond basic statutes and

Photo credit: Construction Physics



Source: HUD Office of Policy Development & Research

Secretary Romney reviewing completed Operation Breakthrough housing in Kalamazoo, Michigan, one of nine sites ultimately awarded with building contracts

executive orders." HUD listened to minority contractors about problems they had encountered in the past, and adjusted the bidding procedure to function in a more flexible manner. Newburg reported that "bonding problems were dealt with head-on," and OB staff offered "consistent direction to contractors" to help them learn how to fulfill their "equal opportunity responsibilities." The major task of building homes required that minority firms and workers were involved in residential development at every level. "That," Newburg said, "is what *breakthrough* is all about."

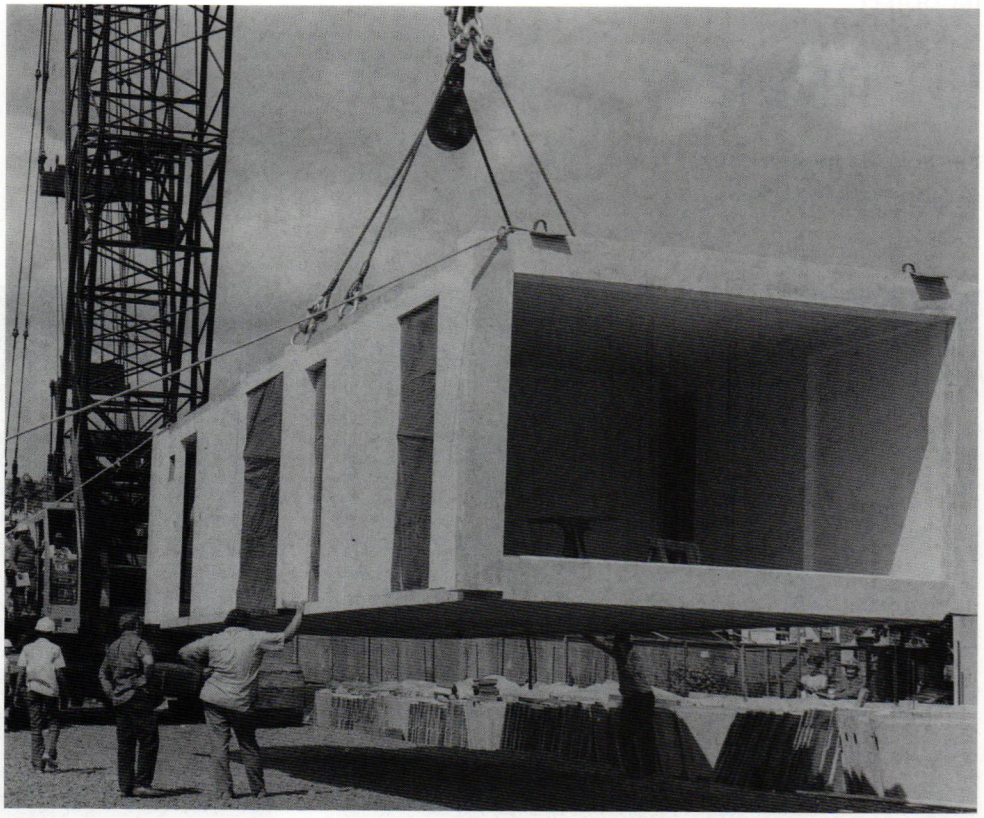
Operation Breakthrough acknowledged that differences in local building codes and building regulations were a major impediment for housing manufacturers.

OB acknowledged that differences in local building codes and building regulations were a major impediment for housing manufacturers, who wanted state governments to replace local building codes with state laws establishing performance standards for manufactured housing. Romney observed that when OB started, "not a single state had a uniform building code that overrode local codes." By late 1971, 20 states had uniform codes, and HUD was now "moving on to a higher plane with interstate agreements and reciprocity," he said. OB staff also addressed disputes involving the shipping of sectional houses and building modules and panels across state lines, and encouraged railroad and trucking companies to negotiate more favorable shipping rates with housing manufacturers.

Romney looked to another path-breaking provision of the Housing Act of 1968 to help him with the thorny issue of financing the sale of the prototype dwellings. He turned to the National Housing Partnerships Corporation (NHPC), the public-private corporation authorized under the bill to help raise private capital for the construction of low- and middle-income housing. Although corporate leaders proved to be more reluctant to financially support the venture than Congress anticipated, the NHPC provided the financing possible for three of the prototype communities to offer low- and middle-income householders the opportunity to become cooperative homeowners.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OB COMMUNITIES?

Critics called OB a failure even before the prototype communities were completed. Today, eight of the original nine prototype communities continue to provide accessible housing, suggesting the need to reconsider what constitutes failed policy. The St. Louis prototype community was razed along with the rest of LeClede Town. The prototype dwellings located in competitive housing markets such as Jersey City, Seattle, Memphis, and Sacramento however, have increased in value over time. The early racial, income, and occupational diversity that characterized the prototype communities have not always persisted over time. The racially and economically mixed population of New Horizons Village chronicled by HUD in 1972 changed within a short time, and the more affluent residents—white and Black—began leaving. Financial problems soon plagued the cooperative that had purchased the units from the developer with the backing of the NHPC.



A modular compartment for the 18-floor Shelley System Operation Breakthrough building at Summit Avenue in Jersey City

OB did not end with the construction of the nine prototype communities. Phase III continued after Romney left office in January 1973. Fourteen of the housing systems providers that participated in OB built 131 projects in 29 states with funds set aside from the public housing and other subsidy programs. When Phase III set-aside funds were exhausted, Forest City-Dillon (now Forest City-Ratner) successfully marketed its prototype dwelling—just as Romney had intended—to both privately and publicly funded developers.

Today, eight of the original nine prototype communities continue to provide accessible housing, suggesting the need to reconsider what constitutes failed policy.

ASSESSING THE PROGRAM

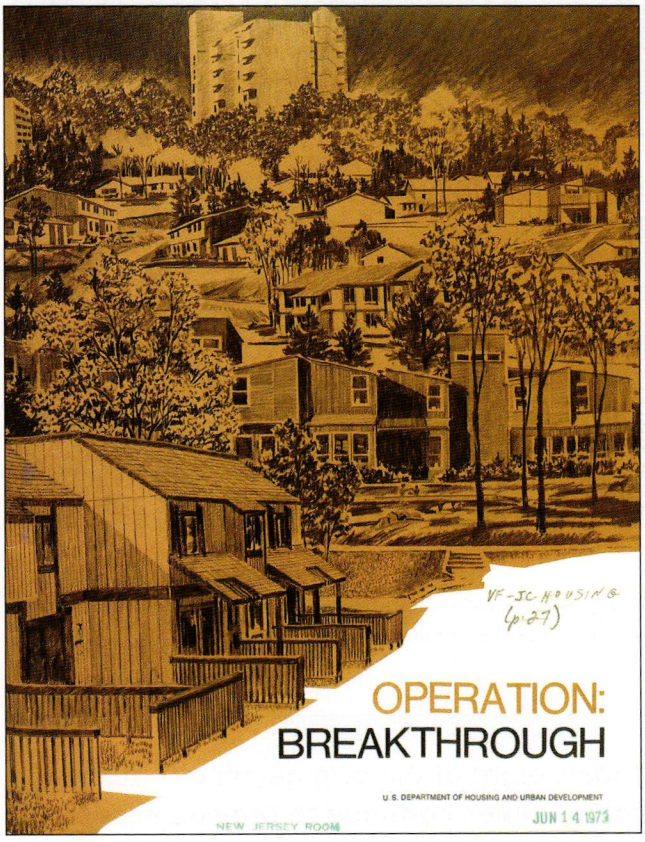
OB fell short in realizing the goal of transforming the low- and middle-income housing market with factory-built housing. Despite the involvement of aerospace firms such as Boeing, no dramatic space-age type of technological advance took place in home construction. OB's accomplishments remain overlooked or ignored. HUD required contractors to consult with potential residents, undertake good-faith efforts to hire minorities at all job levels, and negotiate contracts with minority-owned firms. The department strengthened the existing infrastructure of oversight and accountability needed to ensure housing accessibility and Equal Opportunity Employment.

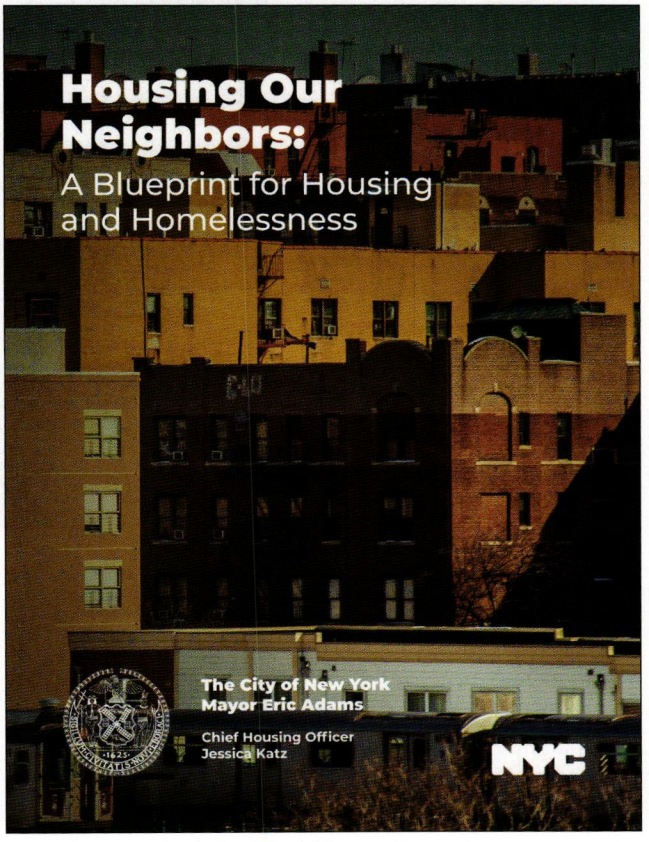
The OB prototype communities offered an alternative to the proliferation of unplanned subdivisions that extended or reinforced segregation by class, color, religion, and income. They helped define what mixed-income, desegregated residential places looked like, and reinforced the importance of site planning in the development of housing for people of all backgrounds and income ranges. OB planners produced site plans seeking, as stated in the program, to "demonstrate new land concepts and housing patterns that HUD hopes will provide some incentive for change." ■

Courtesy of Kristin Szylvian

LIT REVIEW

Key sources for this issue.
Compiled by The Editors





This issue of *Oculus* was inspired by John F. C. Turner's 1972 essay, "Housing as a Verb." We recommend reading the piece in full, along with Michael Cohen's 2015 article, which puts Turner's ideas in a contemporary context. Both can be found on the *Oculus* virtual bookshelf at aiany.org, along with a PDF of the "Operation: Breakthrough" brochure (ca. 1973), and New York City's new "Housing Blueprint," released in June by Mayor Eric Adams.

John F. C. Turner, "Housing as a Verb," chapter in *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process*, ed. John F. C. Turner and Robert Fichter (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1972)

Michael Cohen, "John F. C. Turner and Housing as a Verb," from the journal *Built Environment,* (1978) 41, No. 3 (2015): pp. 412–18

"Operation: Breakthrough," brochure, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, undated, ca. 1973, aiany.org/membership/oculus-magazine/current-issue/

"Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness," NYC Housing Preservation and Development, June 2022, www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/about/housing-blueprint.page

For 2021 statistics on affordable housing in NYC by neighborhood, see NYU Furman Center's "State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2021," June 2022, furmancenter.org/stateofthecity ■

REDEFINING LUXURY: LIVING WITH NATURE

BY DREW LANG, AIA

What I miss most about New Orleans, the city where I grew up, is the magnificent trees—the oak trees, especially. To me, those majestic, aged trees embody both the beauty and power of nature. I think of how you can't leave a building abandoned for long in New Orleans before it is subsumed by vegetation. The haunting images of structures that have been reclaimed in this way remind me that nature can, and will, go on without us. But we can't go on without nature.

The struggle of man versus nature is at the forefront of life in New Orleans, where devastating hurricanes are frequent. It's a conflict the rest of the world is now reckoning with as well. As we experience the effects of climate change, we have no choice but to evaluate our actions, from assessing how we design our buildings, to determining how we live and work in them every day.

Finding solutions to this age-old struggle is complex, but the outcome of doing nothing couldn't be more clear. Climate change will render parts of the world uninhabitable. Already, countless families have been forced to relocate due to advancing sea levels. This isn't happening in far-flung, remote corners of the world, but in major cities like New York. As habitable land and resources dwindle, many people will become "climate refugees." We won't just be battling nature to survive—we'll be battling each other over scarce resources.

In this way, I have come to think of nature—the enjoyment of it, the safety from it—as a type of luxury. Those who can afford it will be able to enjoy nature while remaining safe in their homes and city neighborhoods, while those without the same privileges will be forced to contend with ever-more-frequent extreme weather and climate change events. While luxury is often associated with material goods such as cars, jewelry, and fine art, the luxury of nature can be far more extraordinary. And it can be accessible to all. We as architects must continue to provide our clients and communities with more ways to seek out nature, while at the same time protecting them from weather events and natural disasters.

The transcendentalists philosophized about the transformative power of nature. "In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life...which nature cannot repair," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. But it's more than just philosophy. Many studies show that being in nature, even for short amounts of time, can have a positive impact on both our mental and physical health. Surrounding yourself with nature can be an act of self-care. It's no wonder so many people fled the cities for private land during the pandemic lockdown. Even before this, I noticed rising consumer demand for the luxuries provided by nature. Now it's overwhelming. Privacy, serenity, and ownership of land are at a premium.

We as architects must continue to provide our clients and communities with more ways to seek out nature, while at the same time protecting them from weather events and natural disasters.

As a resurgent embrace of nature continues to drive up demand, however, we need to be conscious of our consumption, balancing this with awareness of nature as an essential resource that ultimately is resilient but fragile. It is our obligation to commune with nature responsibly, ensuring it can be a luxury accessible to all for generations to come.

Drew Lang, AIA, is the founding principal of Lang Studio. Born in New Orleans, Lang completed his degree in architecture at Yale and eventually settled in New York. He founded the Brick & Wonder community, dedicated to developing a sustainable ecosystem for real estate and design professionals. ■

2022 COMMON BOND HONOREES

AIANY congratulates this year's Common Bond Honorees, Mark Chambers, Madelyn Wils, and FXCollaborative, and is thrilled to celebrate them at our October 27 gala.

Mark Chambers
Mark Chambers is a national environmental policy leader, advocate for social justice, and licensed architect inspired by public service and the lessons of collective action.

Most recently, Chambers served the Biden-Harris Administration as a day-one presidential appointee. As Senior Director for Building Emissions and Community Resilience at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, he led the development of the Administration's climate policy for the built environment.

Chambers previously served as the Director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Sustainability and as the Director of Sustainability and Energy for the government of the District of Columbia. In these positions, he led efforts to align social and environmental policy across buildings, waste, transportation, health and energy sectors in America's largest city and the nation's capital.

Chambers is a recipient of the Director's Award from the Smithsonian National Design Awards and the Public Architect Award from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. He speaks frequently on the intersection of climate change, resilient design, and environmental justice and has been featured at forums like Creative Mornings, Living Future, Better Buildings Summit, and Climate Week. His work has been highlighted in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Grist*, *Architectural Record*, *Politico*, *Complex World*, and *Reuters*, among others.

Chambers holds a BArch and a MS in Public Policy and Management, both from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA.

Madelyn Wils
Madelyn Wils served as President and CEO of the Hudson River Park Trust from June 2011 through February 2021. Over the past ten years, she has overseen over $1 billion of private/public partnerships, working with some of the world's top architects and designers to create one-of-a-kind projects, including Little Island (named by *Time Magazine* one of the 100 Wonders of the World), Pier 26 (2021 Municipal Arts Society Masterworks Award for Best Urban Landscape and 2021 Chicago Athenaeum American Architecture Award), Pier 57 (opened Spring 2022), and Pier 97 (under construction).

Previously, Wils was Executive Vice President of Planning, Development and Maritime for the NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), where she was responsible for many revitalization projects throughout the five boroughs. She successfully supervised the rezoning and master plans for Hunters Point South, Coney Island, Willets Point, and Seward Park and oversaw dozens of waterfront developments including parks, transportation improvements, and streetscapes.

Prior to joining NYCEDC, Wils served as President of the Tribeca Film Institute, where she managed the expansion of the organization from a ten-day film festival into a diverse institution offering year-round cultural and educational programming.

From 2001 to 2005, she served as Chair of Community Board One in Lower Manhattan, where she played an integral role in the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan in the aftermath of 9/11. Wils also led the development of the Master Concept Plan for the East River Waterfront and was awarded the Visionary Award from the New York League of Conservation Voters for her efforts.

Wils has been recognized by several organizations for her design and development leadership in the public realm, including with the Waterfront Alliance Heroes of the Harbor Award, Friends of Hudson River Park Leadership Award, the David Rockefeller Downtown Leadership Award, the Historic Districts Council Preservation Award, and the Frances Peters City Garden Club Award.

Wills was a founding Board member of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the Hudson River Park Trust. She has also served on the boards of the Alliance for Downtown New York, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the Battery Conservancy, the Non-Profit Racing Oversight Board, the Empire State Stem Cell Board, Hudson River Park Friends, the Joyce Theater Foundation, the Gateway School, and the Millennium High School Advisory Board.

FXCollaborative
FXCollaborative believes in the powers of intelligence, intuition, and interconnection to design a better world.

Founded over 40 years ago, FXCollaborative is an architecture, urban design, and interior design firm committed to design excellence, social responsibility, and sustainability. The firm currently operate out of their Brooklyn, NY office with 120 employees.

FXCollaborative's portfolio spans the globe and encompasses a wide range of project types and scales. Each project is rooted in their core commitment to improving the world through the social, environmental, and artistic enrichment of the built environment. The firm is vigorously engaged in the reinvention and revitalization of the urban condition and committed to positive change.

FXCollaborative enjoys the challenges that come with solving complex problems, harmonizing competing forces, and building consensus among stakeholders. Their approach is interdisciplinary and iterative, using design as a tool to rapidly explore and understand the opportunities inherent in every challenge. The firm embraces the role of economics, politics, and culture in achieving the best solutions.

FXCollaborative believes in the power of creative collaboration and actively engages clients, consultants, and project stakeholders in a transparent, thoughtful, and rigorous process that promotes excellence. Their inclusive approach means their designs don't just sit on a shelf but win the support they need to be realized.

FXCollaborative brings private developers, public agencies, non-profit organizations, and mission-driven institutions their deep knowledge of and passion for buildings and cities. They recognize that transformation is often incremental, and sudden changes can take years of patient work. Their design solutions are elegant, layered, and integrated, creating rich and diverse places of vibrancy and vitality.

CALL FOR WINTER 2023
CREATING INCLUSIVE SPACES

The term "inclusive" has come to encompass so much idealism, yet is so often a point of tension. Who is being included, and who makes the decision to do so? Here is where the architect can act as a sort of mediator, creating spaces in which boundaries and barriers are eliminated, or at the very least considered carefully. In this way, formerly walled off neighborhoods, institutions, or other potentially exclusionary environments are taking on new identities—but does this shift make for measurable social change?

For the Winter issue of *Oculus*, the editors invite readers to submit 800-word op-eds or captioned visual comments exploring the topic of inclusive space—what is it today, what should it be in the future, and how should architects contribute to it? Please submit materials to editor@aiany.org by December 1.

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FALL AT ITS FULLEST

BENJAMIN PROSKY, ASSOC. AIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AIA NEW YORK CHAPTER/CENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE

Photo credit: Sam Lahoz

After a busy summer season, the Center for Architecture is fully open this fall, boasting a slew of engaging programming that offers many reasons to return to in-person activities.

Archtober

This October, we are pleased to host our annual Archtober festival, now in its 12th year. In 2022, Archtober will collaborate with over 100 partners to offer a broad range of architecture and design activities, exhibitions, talks, and tours across the five boroughs. I invite you to join us for our ever-popular Building of the Day series, which has returned to being fully in-person. We have not fully abandoned some of the advantages of digital programming, however, which allow us to reach even wider and more international audiences. This year, the festival has developed a series of virtual talks on indigenous design, organized in collaboration with the Indigenous Scholars of Architecture Planning and Design. Finally, we are thrilled to launch a new collaboration with Bloomberg Connects, a free mobile app, to create an Archtober mobile experience that makes accessible a selection of Buildings of the Day that we've visited over the years. Check out the full schedule of events at archtober.org.

Fall Exhibitions

We are also proud to open two new exhibitions at the Center this fall. "New Practices New York," opening in time for Archtober on September 29, will reflect on AIA New York Chapter's competition, which has recognized and elevated new and innovative architecture and design practices in the city since 2006. The show will also showcase the work of the competition's 2020 cycle winners BRANDT : HAFERD, Bryony Roberts Studio, Citygroup, GRT Architects, New Affiliates, and NILE.

In addition,we are delighted to open, on November 11, an exhibition of fantastical depictions of imaginary realms, curated by Andy Bernheimer, FAIA, of Bernheimer Architecture and author Kate Bernheimer. Initially begun as a series for the online public architecture, landscape, and urbanism journal *Places*, "Fairy Tale Architecture" invites architects and designers from around the world to design spaces that explore the world of specific tales, melding architecture, design, and literary critique.

Our calendar is also brimming with evening panels and lectures organized by AIANY's 25+ program committees, along with special events organized by the Center with a broad range of collaborators. So, I encourage you to return to the Center for enriching content and opportunities to engage with our vibrant design community!

In Recognition

I continue to be grateful for the tireless commitment of our members, the support of our staff, and the loyalty of our community.

In particular, I would like to thank Brian Loughlin, AIA, for sharing his extensive housing expertise as guest editor of this issue of *Oculus*. Along with Housing Committee Co-chair Peter Bafitis, AIA, and the members of the committee, Brian has helped ensure that affordable housing has and continues to be an important focus for the Chapter.

I would also like to recognize one of the Chapter's most dedicated staff members. This year, Managing Director Suzanne Mecs is celebrating 25 years of employment at AIANY! Throughout her tenure in various functions, Suzanne has collaborated with countless members to help deliver some of our most impactful programs and initiatives. Suzanne's commitment to AIANY is unwavering, so when you see her this fall, please take the time to thank her for her ongoing work with us!

And finally, this fall, our marvelous *Oculus* Editor, Molly Heintz, will wrap up her formal role with this publication. We have benefited tremendously from Molly's deep knowledge of the design disciplines and fantastic insights as a writer and editor. Over the years, Molly has focused our publication's issues on a range of relevant topics and helped us launch our first fully digital issues of *Oculus*. We are grateful that Molly will remain as an advisor to the publication as she continues to pursue her work as director of SVA's design criticism program and other new editorial ventures. Join me in thanking Molly for her adept leadership of *Oculus*!

See you at the Center! ■

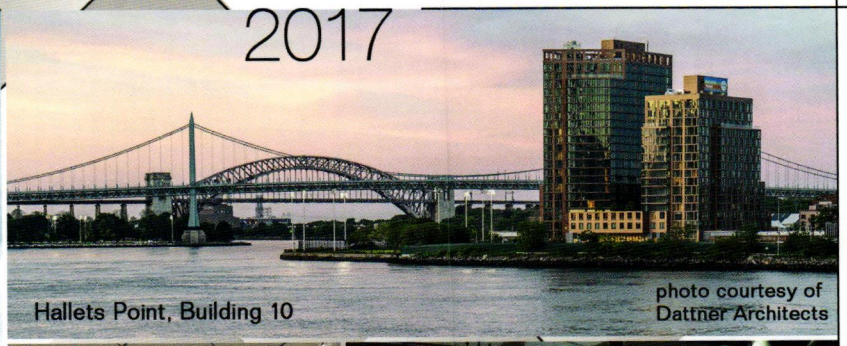
October 1–31, 2022

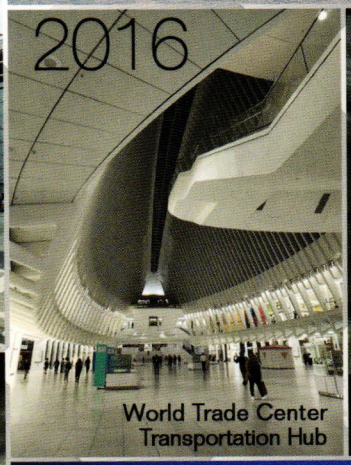
Follow us @archtobernyc!

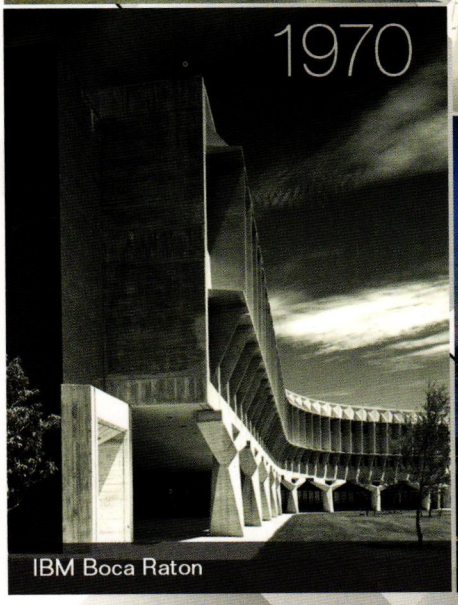
Archtober

Archtober, NYC's Architecture and Design Month, is organized by the Center for Architecture in collaboration with the city's leading cultural institutions. Daily tours, lectures, films, and exhibitions celebrate the city's built environment. To view the entire festival lineup and register for events visit www.archtober.org.

Severud Associates







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